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OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
DIVISION OF FOSTER CARE REVIEW

1996-1997 ANNUAL REPORT



*"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world;
indeed, it's the only thing that ever does." Margaret Mead*

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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

The Honorable David M. Beasley
and Members of the General Assembly

I am pleased to report the activities of the Division of Foster Care Review for 1996. From January 1, 1996, through December 31, 1996, local volunteer Review Board members conducted 9,200 reviews on 5,258 children who remained in the foster care system longer than four months. Review Board volunteers were diligent in their efforts to determine the steps taken by the Department of Social Services towards permanence for these children.

As required by statute, the Division has encouraged the return of children to their natural parents when appropriate; has promoted and encouraged the Department of Social Services to place children with persons suitable and eligible as adoptive parents; has advised foster parents of their rights to petition the Family Court for termination of parental rights and adoption; and has recommended that all efforts be exerted by the Department of Social Services to secure permanent homes for these children.

The Division is committed to continued efforts to improve the delivery of services to foster children and their families in South Carolina. Please do not hesitate to contact me at 734-0480 if you have any questions pertaining to this report.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan B. Bowling
Susan B. Bowling
Division Director

STATE BOARD MEMBERS

as of December 31, 1996

Cecelia Aversa, Chairperson West Columbia, SC, 2nd Congressional District

VACANT, 1st Congressional District

Elizabeth B. Weaver, Easley, SC, 3rd Congressional District

Mary Lynn Melton, Spartanburg, SC, 4th Congressional District

Judy Hamrick, Gaffney, SC, 5th Congressional District

Della Baker, Manning, SC, 6th Congressional District

James Curtis Harkness, Aiken, SC, At-Large

STAFF

Susan B. Bowling, Division Director

Denise T. Barker, Program Director/Medicaid and Training

Beth M. Green, Program Director/Foster Care Review

Melissa Dunlap, General Counsel

Maisy Babbitt, Senior Accountant

Pam Gallion, Administrative Assistant II

Vickie Barfield, Medicaid Review Specialist

Robin Campbell, Project Administrator

Powanda Adams, Review Board Coordinator

Ann Benck, Review Board Coordinator

Keith Campbell, Review Board Coordinator

Stephen Clyburn, Review Board Coordinator

Lynn Pietropaola, Review Board Coordinator

Gayle Robinson, Review Board Coordinator

B-Linda Rogers, Review Board Coordinator

Dallas Shealy, Review Board Coordinator

Elinor Thompson, Review Board Coordinator

Cynthia Tillman, Review Board Coordinator

Lynne Caldwell, Administrative Specialist

Tequila Douglas, Administrative Specialist

State of South Carolina

Office of the Governor - Division of Foster Care Review

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LOCAL REVIEW BOARD CHAIRPERSONS - 1996

First Judicial Circuit

- 1A Doris Boone, St. Matthews
- 1B Brenda Rose Wallace, Orangeburg

Second Judicial Circuit

- 2A Margie Blizzard, Wagner
- 2B Mary Ann Rogers, Aiken

Third Judicial Circuit

- 3A Rosa Conner, Kingstree
- 3B Ruth Shuford, Bishopville

Fourth Judicial Circuit

- 4A Willa Johnson, Wallace
- 4B Wayne Sims, Hartsville

Fifth Judicial Circuit

- 5A Miriam Brown, Columbia
- 5B Wilbur Tucker, Columbia
- 5C Ted Moore, Columbia
- 5D Louise McFarland, Columbia
- 5E Kathy Thornton, Columbia

Sixth Judicial Circuit

- 6A Margarita Pate, Lancaster

7th Judicial Circuit

- 7A Dorothy Hughes, Spartanburg
- 7B Judy Hamrick, Gaffney

Eighth Judicial Circuit

- 8A Sue Summer, Newberry

Ninth Judicial Circuit

- 9A Pearl Jenkins, Charleston
- 9B Christee Hunt, Moncks Corner
- 9C Jackie Brewer, Charleston
- 9D Joanne Penman, Charleston

Tenth Judicial Circuit

- 10A Debbie Thrift, Westminster
- 10B Linda Williams, Easley

Eleventh Judicial Circuit

- 11A Marion Atkins, Columbia
- 11B Gail Nordyke, McCormick

Twelfth Judicial Circuit

- 12A Alice Baker, Florence
- 12B Isabelle Bryant, Mullins

Thirteenth Judicial Circuit

- 13A Scott Hart, Easley
- 13B Tommy Rice, Greenville
- 13C Sara Burnett, Greenville

Fourteenth Judicial Circuit

- 14A Jeanine Cannington, Varnville
- 14B Ollie McAlister, Ridgeland

Fifteenth Judicial Circuit

- 15A David Drayton, Georgetown
- 15B Eaddy Roe, Myrtle Beach
- 15C Al Fanshaw, Conway

Sixteenth Judicial Circuit

- 16A Martha Cowan, Rock Hill

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT.....	3
MISSION STATEMENT.....	5
STATUTORY AUTHORITY FOR THE AGENCY	6
STATUS OF 1995-1996 FOSTER CARE REVIEW BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS	9
1996-1997 FOSTER CARE REVIEW BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS	12
LOCAL FOSTER CARE REVIEW BOARD MEMBERS	17
STATISTICAL INFORMATION - REVIEWS CONDUCTED BY REVIEW BOARDS	25
ADVOCACY - CASE REFERRAL PROCESS	39
DEMOGRAPHIC AND COMPARATIVE DATA.....	41
1996 THERAPEUTIC MEDICAID PLACEMENT DATA	54
MEDICAID REVIEW SYSTEM.....	64
IN CONCLUSION - A WORD FROM THE CHILDREN	66

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Every child in South Carolina deserves the opportunity to grow up in a permanent, nurturing family. Unfortunately, that is not always the case. Over 8,000 children were touched by the foster care system during this reporting period. These children were removed from their own homes because of allegations of abuse and neglect. Foster care was never intended to be a permanent arrangement, yet, as of June 30, 1997, over 3,200 children had been in foster care more than twelve months.

The passage of the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act (Public Law 96-272) in 1980 addressed the critical need of timely permanency planning for children in foster care by requiring that the cases of children in foster care be reviewed semi-annually to determine if placement continues to be warranted and to ensure that appropriate actions are taken to allow children to either return home or be freed for adoption. The South Carolina Department of Social Services contracts with the Division of Foster Care Review for the purchase and provision of case review for Title IV-E foster care cases.

The Division of Foster Care Review provides an external system of accountability and advocacy for children and families involved with the foster care system. The Division looks at the entire system affecting the children and their families, identifies deficiencies, and advocates for due process and quality service delivery. Case specific follow-up was initiated on 1,429 children to address identified concerns and advocate for permanency. The Division of Foster Care Review has legal standing as a party in interest to participate in court proceedings. Participation in judicial reviews to present the recommendations issued by local review boards and address barriers impeding progress has proven an effective way to advocate for permanency for children languishing in the foster care system.

The Division is supported by a seven member State Board. The State Board meets quarterly and is responsible for reviewing and coordinating the activities of the local review boards and making recommendations in an annual report to the General Assembly with regard to foster care policies, procedures, and identified deficiencies of agencies which arrange for foster care of children. The State Board makes recommendations regarding the foster care system based on trends noted subsequent to the statistical analysis of deficiencies identified during individual case reviews conducted by local review boards. The State Board is also responsible for promulgating regulations, upon recommendation of the Division Director, to carry out the mission of the organization.

There are thirty-six (36) local review boards across the state that conduct semi-annual case reviews of all children who have resided in foster care more than four consecutive months; issue recommendations regarding permanent plans; and identify barriers to securing permanent homes for children. There is at least one local review board in each judicial circuit. The number of boards is determined by the number of children in foster care in the circuit. Each local board is comprised of five members who must be residents of the circuit they represent. The 180 local board members are appointed by the Governor upon recommendation by their legislative delegations. Utilizing local citizens in the review process of children in foster care promotes community awareness and responsibility for addressing the problem of child abuse and neglect.

The local review boards reviewed 5,258 children during 1996. Twenty-four percent (24%) of the children reviewed by local boards were in therapeutic placements funded by Medicaid. Pursuant to a contract with the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, the Division of Foster Care Review has developed and implemented a Medicaid Quality Assurance review process for children placed in Medicaid funded therapeutic placements. This quality review system has been incorporated into the current structure of the Division.

There are several initiatives underway focusing on improvement of the child welfare system. The Division is represented on the Bench/Bar Committee of South Carolina Families for Kids, a partnership between South Carolina Department of Social Services and the United Way of South Carolina funded by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation. The aim of this committee is to identify barriers and offer recommendations for solutions to ensure timely permanency planning for foster and adoptive children. The Division is also participating in the Court Improvement Project which is focusing on improving the effectiveness of judicial proceedings in abuse and neglect, foster care, and adoption cases. The Division continues to work collaboratively with the Department of Social Services, Guardian *ad Litem* Programs, local Foster Parent Associations, and other child welfare entities to address systemic issues impacting the child welfare system. We believe that working together we can make a difference for children in our foster care system.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

In the early 1970's in South Carolina, many child welfare professionals and citizen groups began advocacy efforts on behalf of children in the foster care system. These efforts resulted from their concern over the plight of the child adrift in the foster care system. The ultimate result of these efforts was the establishment of the South Carolina Children's Foster Care Review Board System in 1974, one of the first such organizations in the nation.

Six major private organizations between 1970 and 1974 spearheaded the initial efforts to obtain permanent homes for children in foster care. These organizations were the American Civil Liberties Union, the South Carolina Council for Human Rights, the South Carolina League of Women Voters, the Midlands Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, the South Carolina Youth Workers Association and Helping Hands of Aiken County. Child psychiatrists, child psychologists, social work professors, law professors and various church leaders also participated as private citizens to help give direction to the project.

Research to document the condition of foster care in South Carolina was a primary focus of these organizations. Four studies were done in cooperation with Representative Carolyn Frederick, Vice-Chairperson of the South Carolina General Assembly's Study Committee on Legal and Legislative Matters Pertaining to Children. The results of these four studies showed the following:

1. Seventy-six percent (76%) of the children in the Department of Social Services foster care program would neither return home nor be adopted under the existing system. Services were not being provided to the parents by the system to facilitate return home, and no efforts were made to free many children eligible for adoption under the abandonment statute.
2. A survey of fourteen private and three public institutions, formerly known as orphanages, showed that the Department of Social Services placed 43% of the children while private placements accounted for 57% of the children placed. Some 20-50% of these children were eligible for adoption under the abandonment statute; however, none of these institutions stated that adoption was one of their services. In addition, most of these institutions offered no services to families to enable these children to return home.
3. Forty-three percent (43%) of the children in foster care had been in two or more foster placements and eighteen percent (18%) had been in three or more.
4. No method existed to keep track of children in foster care. The courts expressed concern about children being lost in the system. Even when children were freed for adoption, the courts had no way of knowing if the children had been placed adoptively.
5. The cost to taxpayers for keeping children in foster care was growing steadily with no resolution in sight.

6. Children were suffering irreparable psychological damage as victims of foster care drift.

The findings from these studies clearly indicated the need for a system to monitor the cases of children in foster care to achieve appropriate permanent placements for these children. Thus, a statewide foster care review board system was legislated by the 1974 General Assembly. In March of 1975, Governor James Edwards, by Executive Order, established the Office of Child Advocacy as a division of the Office of the Governor. This Executive Order charged that the Office of Child Advocacy establish and coordinate the Children's Foster Care Review Board System and act as ombudsman on behalf of the abused, neglected, abandoned and dependent children of the State. The initial funding for the Review Board System as part of the Office of Child Advocacy was shared by the State and the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation.

The Children's Foster Care Review Board System was fully funded by the General Assembly as a separate state agency in 1977. The Office of Child Advocacy existed as a program of the Review Board System until 1980, at which time it was returned to the Governor's Office. While a part of the Review Board System, the Office of Child Advocacy conducted an ombudsman program for children in general and a training program in the prevention and identification of child abuse and neglect for hospitals and other organizations upon request.

In 1985, the Review Board System was placed under proviso legislation in order to restructure and reorganize the Agency. Permanent legislation and regulations passed by the General Assembly in 1986 restored the Agency to permanent status. South Carolina state government restructuring in July 1993 returned the Foster Care Review Board to the Governor's Office as a separate division under the Office of Executive Policy and Programs.

The Division of Foster Care Review is currently comprised of a staff of twenty-one serving thirty-six Review Boards across the State. The Review Board System reviews the cases of approximately 5,000 children in foster care twice annually; statistically evaluates the state of foster care in South Carolina; and makes recommendations to the Governor and child-caring facilities as outlined by South Carolina law.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Division of Foster Care Review provides a system of accountability and advocacy for children and families involved with the foster care system. The Division operates pursuant to Section 20-7-2376 *et seq.*, of the South Carolina Code of Laws, 1976, as amended. The mission of the Division is to review children in public foster care to assess efforts made for permanent placement so children do not linger in the foster care system; to monitor compliance with federal requirements set forth in Public Law 96-272; to report to the Department of Social Services and other adoptive or foster care agencies any deficiencies in these agencies' efforts to secure permanent homes for children; to report to the Family Court on the status of court ordered treatment plans and services; to maintain a separate quality assurance review process for foster children in therapeutic placements funded by Medicaid, as per contract with the Department of Health and Human Services; and to make recommendations to the General Assembly with regard to policies, procedures, and deficiencies of agencies which arrange for foster care of children.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY FOR THE AGENCY

Statutory Authority

Section 20-7-2376 *et seq.*, of the South Carolina Code of Laws, creates the Children's Foster Care Review Board System and establishes the Division to administer case reviews as follows:

I. State Board for Review of Foster Care of Children

The Division is supported by a State Board which consists of seven members, all of whom must be past or present members of a local review board. There must be one member from each congressional district and one member from the State at large, all appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. Members of the State Board serve four-year terms and until their successors are appointed and qualify. A chairperson is elected from the membership of the State Board for a two-year term.

The State Board is responsible for:

- a. the promulgation of regulations, upon recommendation of the Division Director, pursuant to the provisions of South Carolina Code of Laws Section 20-7-2376 *et seq.*, relating to the functions, policies, and procedures of the Review Board System;
- b. the promulgation of regulations, upon recommendation of the Division Director, to provide for review of necessary reports and other information required from state, county and private agencies and institutions, and to report to the Family Court on the status of court ordered treatment plans;
- c. the dissemination of the annual report to the General Assembly which includes recommendations regarding foster care policies, procedures, and any deficiencies of public and private agencies and institutions which arrange for foster care for children, and the activities of the Review Board System;
- d. the review and coordination of the activities of the local review boards; and
- e. the creation or dissolution of local review boards as necessary to maintain appropriate caseloads for each board.

II. Local Review Boards

There are thirty-six local review boards, each composed of five members, with at least one local board in each of the sixteen judicial circuits throughout the state. Board members are appointed by the Governor upon recommendation by their respective legislative delegation. South Carolina Code Section 20-7-2385 provides that Dorchester and Georgetown Counties' appointments are

governed by provisions of Act 512 and Act 515 of 1996, respectively, which allows their county councils to make recommendations.

The functions and duties of local review board members are as follows:

1. To review every six months, but no less frequently than once every six months, the cases of children who have resided in public foster care for a period of more than four consecutive months and to review every six months the cases of children who have resided in private foster care for a period of more than six consecutive months to determine what efforts have been made by the supervising agency or child caring facility to acquire a permanent home for the child.
2. In private foster care cases, review boards will recommend continued placement in the child caring facility unless the parents are able to resume care, in at least those instances when:
 - a. children are privately placed in privately owned facilities or group homes; and
 - b. a notarized affidavit of summary review is executed by the child caring facility and is valid on its face; and
 - c. the affidavit of summary review is submitted to the board every six months. It must be accepted by the board if it attests to the statutorily mandated conditions and is valid on its face.¹
3. (Except as provided in subsection [2]) To encourage the return of children to their natural parents, or, upon determination during a case review of the local review board that this return is not in the best interest of the child, to recommend to the appropriate agency that action be taken for a maximum effort to place the child for adoption.
4. To promote and encourage all agencies and facilities involved in placing children in foster care to place children with persons suitable and eligible as adoptive parents.
5. To advise foster parents of their right to petition the Family Court for termination of parental rights and for adoption and to encourage these foster parents to initiate these proceedings in an appropriate case when it has been determined by the local review board that return to the natural parent is not in the best interest of the child.
6. To recommend that a child caring facility or agency exert all possible efforts to make arrangements for permanent foster care or guardianship for children for whom return to natural parents or adoption is not feasible or possible as determined during a case review by the local review board.

¹ Effective January 1, 1994, children privately placed in private children's homes were no longer reviewed by the Foster Care Review Board. Statutory authority was granted to the Review Board in Proviso #6DD.39 of the Fiscal Year 93/94 budget to cease these reviews. The General Assembly believed it to be a more appropriate use of state dollars to focus reviews on the cases of children who are in the custody of the State rather than private cases.

7. To report to the State Office of the Department of Social Services and other adoptive or foster care agencies any deficiencies in these agencies' efforts to secure permanent homes for children. These deficiencies are identified in the local boards' review of these cases as provided for in subsection (1) of this section.

Any case findings or recommendations of a local review board are advisory.

Any person or agency aggrieved by an action or recommendation of a local review board may seek relief by petition to the family court of that county which shall issue a rule to show cause why the action or recommendation of the local review board should not be set aside or modified.

The Foster Care Review Board may participate in judicial reviews of a child's case, but will file a motion to intervene if it intends to become a party to the action.

No person may be employed by the Division or serve on the state or a local foster care review board if the person:

1. is the subject of an indicated report or affirmative determination of abuse or neglect as maintained by the Department of Social Services in the Central Registry of Child Abuse and Neglect pursuant to Section 20-7-680; or,
2. has been convicted or pled guilty or nolo contendere to:
 - a) an "offense against the person" as provided for in Title 16, Chapter 3;
 - b) an "offense against morality or decency" provided for in Title 16, Chapter 15; or,
 - c) contributing to the delinquency of a minor, as provided for in Section 16-17-490.

Before a person is employed by the Division or before an appointment or reappointment is made to the state or a local foster care review board, the Division submits the name of the potential employee or board member to the Department of Social Services for a records check of indicated reports or affirmative determinations from the Central Registry of Child Abuse and Neglect and to the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division for a criminal records background check to verify the applicant's status.

STATUS OF 1995-1996 FOSTER CARE REVIEW BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board of Directors made three recommendations in its 1995-96 Annual Report to the Governor. Updates as to action taken regarding these recommendations is provided below. These updates also include activities that may be on-going relative to recommendations issued by the Review Board.

RECOMMENDATION I: ENHANCED ADOPTION SERVICES

The Review Board recommends that enhanced adoption services be made available to South Carolina's foster children in an effort to secure permanent homes for these children and to reduce the length of time spent in foster care by children who cannot return to their homes of origin.

Update:

- New legislation, South Carolina Code Section 20-7-766, as amended, now requires the Department of Social Services to "exercise and document every reasonable effort to promote and expedite the adoptive placement and adoption of a child, including a thorough adoption assessment and child-specific recruitment." The legislation also requires that "adoptive placements be diligently sought for the child and failure to do so solely because the child is classified 'special needs' is expressly prohibited." Precise definitions of "thorough adoption assessment" and "child-specific recruitment" are provided in the language of the statute.
- Permanent adoptive homes were identified for 303 children, a forty-five percent (45%) improvement over 1995.
- One Church One Child of South Carolina, Inc., in partnership with Reid House of Christian Services, received South Carolina Families for Kids funding to develop and manage the African-American Adoption Center.
- A 1-888-CARE-4-US intake line for adoptions was established at the African-American Adoption Center.
- Private certified investigators were hired to help the Department of Social Services with completing adoptive home studies.
- A contract was awarded to Children Unlimited, Inc., to provide statewide adoption preservation services. The Department of Social Services hired regional adoption

preservation staff to assist Department of Social Services families following adoption finalizations.²

RECOMMENDATION II: IMPROVED RECRUITMENT, TRAINING, INVOLVEMENT AND SUPPORT FOR FOSTER PARENTS

The Review Board recommends that recruitment, training, involvement and support of foster parents in the area of permanency planning for foster children in their homes be improved.

Update:

- New legislation, South Carolina Code, Section 20-7-767, as amended, now requires, monthly face-to-face contact between the assigned Department of Social Services' caseworker and the foster parents, and any other adult living in the home. The legislation also requires that letters of invitation to local Foster Care Review Board meetings be mailed to all foster parents three weeks in advance, and if unable to attend the Review, requires that a progress report from the foster parents be submitted to the Review Board.
- Another provision of the new legislation, South Carolina Code, Section 20-7-767(E), specifies that by January 15, 1999, the Department of Social Services must provide the General Assembly with a report on the status of the foster care system. One specific requirement of the report is to include specific standards for the training of foster parents, including the type of training provided.
- Communication initiatives at South Carolina Families for Kids focused on a kickoff for the 1-888-CARE-4-US as "A New Beginning for Our Children." A public relations firm researched the African-American community to target audiences and develop message strategies for foster and adoptive parent recruitment.

²

Some information in these updates provided by the South Carolina Families for Kids, Annual Report 1996.

RECOMMENDATION III: IMPROVED LEGAL RESOURCES FOR FOSTER CHILDREN

The Review Board recommends that legal resources and legal support available to children in foster care be improved to ensure that children do not linger unnecessarily in the foster care system due to legal delays or inaction.

Update:

- The Review Board hired an additional attorney in order to increase the ability of local boards to participate in court appearances on behalf of children in foster care.
- The South Carolina Department of Social Services restructured the legal system within the Department and implemented a streamlined process for termination of parental rights for the counties.
- The Children's Law Office conducted training on the termination of parental rights process and revisions to the child welfare laws for Guardians *ad litem*, private attorneys and child welfare staff.

1996-1997 FOSTER CARE REVIEW BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

Pursuant to South Carolina Code Section 20-7-2376 *et seq.*, the South Carolina Board of Directors for the Review of Foster Care of Children annually makes recommendations to the General Assembly with regard to the foster care policies, procedures, and practices of public agencies which arrange for the foster care of children. These recommendations are determined through analysis of foster care cases reviewed by the thirty-six local review boards and data collected through research and studies. The recommendations for 1996-97 are based in part on statistical indicators derived from Review Board data as well as on information obtained from the Review Board's participation in other aspects of the child welfare system.

RECOMMENDATION I: ADOPTION

The Review Board recommends that adoption be considered as a primary permanent outcome for children in the foster care system who cannot return to their biological parents. This recommendation is made in support of legislation passed by the General Assembly in May 1997, that requires thorough adoption assessments and enhanced adoption services for all children for whom return home is not an option.

REFERENCED DATA:

- Review Board data for 1996 indicates a fifty-one percent (51%) increase in the number of children who left foster care to be placed with relatives or individuals who were not their biological parents. More children reviewed by the Review Board leave care due to emancipation and relative/non-relative placements than those who are adopted.
- Review Board data for 1996 indicates a ten percent (10%) increase in the number of recommendations issued by local boards for termination of parental rights when compared to 1995 data. This indicates that there are increasing numbers of children in the foster care system for whom local boards determine that a permanent adoptive home would be the best permanent plan for the child.
- Studies show that only ten percent (10%) to twelve percent (12%) of older child adoptions - children three and older - disrupt (Berry & Barth, 1990).
- The National Urban League African-American Pulse Survey revealed that three million (or one third) of African-American households were interested in formally adopting.
- The Federal Adoption Promotion Act of 1997 (H.R. 867) passed the House of Representatives by an overwhelming vote of 416 to 5. This bill contains provisions for shortening the length of time between a child's entry into foster care and permanency planning hearings and provides per child bonuses to states that increase adoptive placements

of foster children. The United States Senate is currently working on similar companion legislation for incorporation into a final comprehensive adoption bill.

SUPPORTING INITIATIVES/STATUTES:

- *South Carolina Code of Laws, Section 20-7-766(D), as amended*, states that the Department of Social Services must exercise and document every reasonable effort to promote and expedite an adoptive placement for a child who cannot return home. The statute states that exclusion of a child based on a classification of "special needs" is expressly prohibited and each child must receive a thorough adoption assessment and child-specific recruitment.
- *South Carolina Code of Laws, Section 20-7-20(D)*, states that all children in South Carolina who must be permanently removed from their homes be placed in adoptive homes so that they may become members of a family by legal adoption or absent that possibility, other permanent settings.
- *South Carolina Code of Laws, Section 20-7-2376(C)*, states that the local Children's Foster Care Review Board, upon determination that return home is not in the best interest of a child, must recommend that action be taken for a maximum effort to place the child adoptively.
- The South Carolina Families for Kids Project is a joint venture of the South Carolina Department of Social Services and the United Way of South Carolina. Funded in part by a three-year grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the project is designed to improve the foster care system in South Carolina. The primary objective of the South Carolina Families for Kids Project is to find a permanent family for every child within twelve months.

DESIRED OUTCOMES:

- Adoption will be explored as a permanency option for all children who cannot return to their biological parents. This includes adoption by relatives who may be identified as suitable resources for children who cannot return home.
- More children in foster care will be accepted for adoption services.
- More prospective adoptive families will be recruited and prepared to participate in a positive adoption experience.
- Dual training and licensing for prospective foster and adoptive families will be implemented to better facilitate the transition from foster care to adoption for children and families.
- Post-adoptive services will be made available in an effort to support adoptive families.

- More adoptions will be finalized which will reduce the number of children in foster care as well as reduce the average length of time children spend in care.

RECOMMENDATION II: CONCURRENT CASE PLANNING

The Review Board recommends that appropriate, timely, individualized and concurrent case planning be facilitated for children in the foster care system based on the child's urgent need for stability, security and continuity. Quality concurrent case planning should be in place for children entering the foster care system in order to establish alternative permanent plans should return home not be an option for children after six months in foster care.

REFERENCED DATA:

- Thirty-four percent (34%) of the programmatic Areas of Concern³ cited by local review boards in 1996 were related to case planning issues. Thirty-two percent (32%) of all the Areas of Concern cited by local review boards were related to policy and procedure violations that inhibit quality casework services to children and families.

SUPPORTING INITIATIVES/STATUTES:

- *South Carolina Code of Laws Section 207-764(A)* specifies that a case planning document be presented to the court at the removal hearing and that the plan must include specific time frames for completion of the plan's objectives.
- The Child Protection Reform Act of 1996 specifies time lines and outcomes in regard to permanency planning issues on each child's case brought before the Family Court for routine permanency planning hearings.

DESIRED OUTCOME:

- One foster care placement be made for each child who has been removed from his/her family. Foster families or relatives are then prepared to offer a permanent adoptive home should the agency's efforts to preserve the biological family fail.

³

Areas of Concern are defined as violations of policies or law related to children in foster care in South Carolina.

RECOMMENDATION III: LEGAL ISSUES

The Review Board recommends that all parties with responsibilities in the judicial process for children in the Family Court continue current efforts to provide quality and timely legal action for children who wait in the foster care system for permanent homes.

REFERENCED DATA:

- Review Board data for 1996 indicates that forty percent (40%) of the Areas of Concern cited by the Review Board were related to legal issues surrounding children in foster care. For example: nineteen percent (19%) of cases reviewed during this time period did not receive timely permanency planning hearings as required by statute and eleven percent (11%) of cases reviewed did not have timely merit hearings. The percentages for these delayed hearings have increased when compared to 1995 data.
- Reviews from local review boards generated a total of 374 referrals to the Review Board legal department. The purpose of these referrals is to address barriers within the legal system that prevent movement of a child's case toward permanency. Through these referrals, the Review Board legal staff was able to participate in cases with other legal counsel involved as well as the Family Court.

SUPPORTING INITIATIVES/STATUTES:

- The South Carolina General Assembly passed the Child Protection Reform Act of 1996. This legislation revises and improves many aspects of previous child protection laws. Implementation of this statute began January 1, 1997.
- The Child Protection Reform Act of 1996 specifies time lines and outcomes for children brought before the Family Court for permanency planning hearings based on their age and circumstance.
- In an effort to accomplish more timely termination of parental rights actions for children in foster care, the South Carolina Department of Social Services restructured the process by which counties initiate termination of parental rights actions through the use of local county attorneys working under contract with the Department.
- The Bench/Bar subcommittee of the South Carolina Families for Kids Project continues to study ways in which the use of legal resources can be enhanced to better serve South Carolina's foster children.
- The Division of Foster Care Review added an attorney position to their legal staff to increase the ability of local review boards to participate in court hearings involving children under their review.

- The Children's Law Office became a clearinghouse for legal issues related to children during 1996. Training sessions related to specific legal matters concerning children also were conducted by the Children's Law Office during 1996.
- The Court Improvement Project has been completed for South Carolina. The final report, when available, will make specific recommendations and findings related to court intervention on behalf of children in South Carolina.

DESIRED OUTCOMES:

- All foster children will receive timely court hearings as per the Child Protection Reform Act of 1996.
- The amount of time required to process termination of parental rights actions through the Family Court will continue to be reduced resulting in more timely placements of children in permanent adoptive homes.
- The Division of Foster Care Review will continue to increase monthly participation in court actions on behalf of children in foster care who are reviewed by local review boards.

LOCAL FOSTER CARE REVIEW BOARD MEMBERS

The 180 volunteers who serve on local Foster Care Review Boards are the power that drives the Division of Foster Care Review. The commitment and dedication afforded to the child welfare system in South Carolina by these concerned community advocates is unmatched. During 1996, members serving on local Foster Care Review Boards donated 10,885 hours of volunteer service to children and families in South Carolina through their work on local boards. These volunteer hours do not include the many other ways that local board members advocate for children, families and system reform outside of their monthly meetings.

There are four major areas in which citizen involvement in the third party review process is beneficial. First, the citizens involved in an on-going program of foster care review help to educate their local communities as to the needs of children and families in their areas. A second important component is the strong advocacy skills used by these volunteers to bring change to a large, unwieldy bureaucracy. Informed citizens form a constituency for foster children for the state legislature, leaders of state government agencies, the Family Court, their local communities and their own families. Third, the citizen reviewer brings an objective view to the case review process by having a perspective that reflects no vested interest in any one dimension of the system. Finally, citizen participation in the child review process draws the community focus to children's issues. This involvement effectively broadens the base of accountability for all public and private service providers operating on behalf of children in South Carolina.

The unique position afforded to board members through their service on local boards allows them to penetrate the veil of confidentiality that hides children in foster care and to then appropriately advocate on their behalf. The South Carolina citizen review system is an outstanding example of the way public/private partnerships can work together toward a common goal.

Local review board members met regionally with local County Department of Social Service staff during 1996. One purpose of these meetings was to identify service projects that the local boards could initiate or join. The goal was for this type of effort to allow the county staff to see the local review board as a resource for them through community networking. Some of these local service projects are described below.

- Several boards adopted foster families to assist with Christmas giving.
- One board sponsored an "Undy-Sunday" at a local church. Members of the congregation were asked to bring children's underwear, diapers and socks for foster parents to have available when children come into their homes with little or no personal belongings.
- Another board organized and coordinated a "Stand for Healthy Children" rally. This community effort promoted a day of fun, games and information to promote healthy living for children and families.
- Yet another board worked with a local church group to prepare bags of toiletries for children who enter foster care, particularly teenagers. This gave many young people dealing with troubled situations some sense of having their personal needs met by caring strangers.

POSITION DESCRIPTION - LOCAL REVIEW BOARD MEMBER

JOB PURPOSE

Under limited direction from the Division of Foster Care Review, each volunteer actively participates in case reviews of children in foster care. Volunteers attend regular review board meetings and participate in board decisions on children reviewed. Community input is utilized by board members in assessing steps taken by custodial agency to facilitate permanence for children in foster care. Reviews conducted by review board volunteers fulfill the federal and state statutory requirements for third party review of children in foster care.

JOB DUTIES

1. Formulates recommendations for permanent plans for cases reviewed; addresses violations of law and policy found in cases reviewed and addresses barriers to permanence that may exist.
2. Examines and evaluates documents relevant to a child's case to determine efforts made by the placing agency towards permanence for the child. These documents include, but are not limited to, case plans, court orders, psychologicals, and related professional reports.
3. Conducts interviews and gathers information from interested parties attending reviews for the purpose of determining efforts toward permanence for the child. These interested parties include, but are not limited to, birth parents, foster parents, caseworkers, casework supervisors, adoption workers, professional treatment staff, attorneys and Guardians *ad litem*.
4. Evaluates and assesses the status of court ordered treatment plans on individual cases reviewed.
5. Participates as necessary in court hearings involving children reviewed.

What knowledge, skills and abilities are needed by an individual for appointment to this position? Where/how would an individual normally acquire these skills, abilities and knowledge?

Service on a local board is a volunteer position. Members are recommended for appointment by local legislative delegations and appointed for service by the Governor. The main requirements are an interest in children and a willingness to commit the time needed for service.

Describe the training and supervision a volunteer receives in order to do this job.

All appointees operate in a volunteer capacity with limited supervision. Orientation and basic certification training courses are offered within the first year of service with on-going annual training thereafter. Each local board is assigned a professional staff person who acts as a resource and coordinator for the board.

LOCAL REVIEW BOARD MEMBERS

As of December 31, 1996

REVIEW BOARD MEMBER INFORMATION

Board	Residence	County	Race	Sex	Occupation
<u>Board 1A</u>					
Eleanor Bilton	Holly Hill	Orangeburg	W	F	retired/public health
Linda Knott	St. Matthews	Calhoun	W	F	secretary
Vacant		Calhoun			
Valeria Staley	Orangeburg	Orangeburg	B	F	retired educator
Ethel Williams	Elloree	Orangeburg	B	F	retired educator
<u>Board 1B</u>					
Marsha Korpanty	Summerville	Dorchester	W	F	school psychologist
Alice Pinckney	St. George	Dorchester	B	F	retired /education
Ginger Sims	Orangeburg	Orangeburg	W	F	banking
Brenda Wallace	Orangeburg	Orangeburg	B	F	education
Linda Wright	Summerville	Dorchester	W	F	retired/human services
<u>Board 2A</u>					
Margie Blizzard	Perry	Aiken	W	F	retired/sales
Betty Cheatham	Aiken	Aiken	B	F	coordinator/education
Mary Smart	Williston	Barnwell	W	F	retired
Vacant		Barnwell			
Vacant		Aiken			
<u>Board 2B</u>					
Elouise Delaine	Denmark	Bamberg	B	F	retired
Arlene Graves	Denmark	Bamberg	B	F	retired/education
Mary Ann Rogers	Aiken	Aiken	W	F	education
Vacant		Aiken			
Vacant		Aiken			
<u>Board 3A</u>					
Rosa Conner	Kingstree	Williamsburg	B	F	retired
Carrie Sinkler-Parker	Alcolu	Clarendon	B	F	human services
Lois McInville	Manning	Clarendon	W	F	retired
Laura McKnight	Kingstree	Williamsburg	B	F	retired
Nell Sprott	Manning	Clarendon	W	F	retired/education

Board 3B

Eric Bultman	Sumter	Sumter	B	M	self-employed
Frances Hill	Sumter	Sumter	B	F	program coordinator
Ellen Leventis	Sumter	Sumter	W	F	homemaker
Rose M. Newman	Sumter	Sumter	W	F	homemaker
Ruth Shuford	Bishopville	Lee	W	F	retired

Board 4A

Martha Alderman	Little Rock	Dillon	W	F	homemaker
Sue Brigman	Blenheim	Marlboro	W	F	retired
Willa Johnson	Wallace	Marlboro	W	F	retired
Herbert Washington	Bennettsville	Marlboro	B	M	retired
James Crawford	Dillon	Dillon	B	M	retired/education

Board 4B

Sarah Campbell	Chesterfield	Chesterfield	W	F	retired/human services
Tommy McCray	Pageland	Chesterfield	W	M	retired
Mary J. McDonald	Hartsville	Darlington	W	F	retired/school guidance
Elizabeth Rivers	Chesterfield	Chesterfield	W	F	retired/school guidance
Wayne Sims	Hartsville	Darlington	W	M	management

Board 5A

Miriam Brown	Columbia	Richland	W	F	administration/human services
Brenda Grays	Irmo	Richland	B	F	banking
Henry Hopkins	Columbia	Richland	B	M	retired
Elise Moore	Columbia	Richland	W	F	consultant
John Kirby	Columbia	Richland	W	M	retired

Board 5B

Esther Kelly	Columbia	Richland	W	F	retired
Jan Hadwin	Columbia	Richland	W	F	retired
Jean Slider	Columbia	Richland	W	F	retired
Wilbur Tucker	Columbia	Richland	B	M	retired
Zephoria Tucker	Columbia	Richland	B	F	human services

Board 5C

Susie Cureton	Columbia	Richland	B	F	education
Clara Dubard	Columbia	Richland	B	F	consultant/education
Mary Havens	Columbia	Richland	W	F	education
Elizabeth Smith	Columbia	Richland	W	F	administration/human services
Ted Moore	Columbia	Richland	W	M	retired

Board 5D

Lillian Adderley	Columbia	Richland	B	F	retired
Judith Hamre	Columbia	Richland	W	F	
Wilhelmina Kennedy	Columbia	Richland	B	F	retired
Louise McFarland	Columbia	Richland	W	F	retired
Annie McNair	Columbia	Richland	B	F	retired

Board 5E

Joseph Connell	Camden	Kershaw	W	M	attorney
Rengy Marshall	Camden	Kershaw	W	F	homemaker
James Murray	Columbia	Richland	B	M	
Eugene Rolllins	Liberty Hill	Kershaw	W	M	minister
Kathy Thornton	Columbia	Richland	W	F	social worker

Board 6A

Vicki Hinson	Lancaster	Lancaster	W	F	nurse
Vacant		Lancaster			
Rebecca Waldrop	Chester	Chester	W	F	product manager
Herman Young	Blair	Fairfield	B	M	law enforcement
Elizabeth Smith	Chester	Chester	W	F	retired

Board 7A

Robert Hall	Greer	Spartanburg	W	M	minister
Dorothy Hughes	Spartanburg	Spartanburg	B	F	retired/education
Mary Lynn Melton	Spartanburg	Spartanburg	W	F	consultant
Vacant		Spartanburg			
Delphine Thornton	Roebuck	Spartanburg	B	F	retired

Board 7B

Laura Emrich	Gaffney	Cherokee	W	F	homemaker
Cris Foster	Roebuck	Spartanburg	W	F	retired banker
Vacant		Spartanburg			
Rita Hunt	Woodruff	Spartanburg	W	F	grant writer
James Lane	Gaffney	Cherokee	B	M	minister

Board 8A

Eleanor Litts	Hodges	Greenwood	W	F	retired/farming
Juanita Hozey	Abbeville	Abbeville	W	F	youth minister
Sue Summer	Newberry	Newberry	W	F	communication consultant
Vacant		Abbeville			
Vacant		Laurens			

Board 9A

Phyllis Tipton	Charleston	Charleston	W	F	sales
Gary Goss	Mt. Pleasant	Charleston	W	M	self-employed
Pearl Jenkins	Charleston	Charleston	B	F	homemaker
Jeannette Lee	Mt. Pleasant	Charleston	B	F	homemaker
Rebecca Gilliard	Charleston	Charleston	B	F	medical administration

Board 9B

William Fletcher	Moncks Corner	Berkeley	W	M	retired
William Godwin	Hanahan	Berkeley	W	M	retired
Christee Hunt	Moncks Corner	Berkeley	W	F	homemaker
Rosetta Mitchell	Goose Creek	Berkeley	B	F	counselor
Winnie Wilson	Moncks Corner	Berkeley	W	F	retired

Board 9C

Jackie Brewer	Charleston	Charleston	W	F	accountant
Jill Stevenson	Folly Beach	Charleston	W	F	homemaker
Nicholas Cuomo	Charleston	Charleston	W	M	retired
Charles Green	Charleston	Charleston	B	M	law enforcement
Vacant		Charleston			

Board 9D

Barbara Acobe	Charleston	Charleston	B	F	public administration
John Henry	N. Charleston	Charleston	W	M	retired
Joan Mack	Charleston	Charleston	B	F	college administrator
Burnet Mendelsohn	Charleston	Charleston	W	M	self-employed
Joanne Penman	Charleston	Charleston	W	F	human services

Board 10A

Carolyn Davis	Walhalla	Oconee	W	F	homemaker
Martha Parker	Seneca	Oconee	W	F	homemaker
George Sloan	Seneca	Oconee	B	M	
Deborah Thrift	Westminster	Oconee	W	F	homemaker
Lucy Wilkerson	Westminster	Oconee	W	F	retired

Board 10B

Linda Alewine	Iva	Anderson	W	F	homemaker
Charles Jowers	Anderson	Anderson	W	M	self-employed
Angie Scott	Anderson	Anderson	B	F	human services
Lillian Walton	Anderson	Anderson	Bi	F	homemaker
Linda Williams	Easley	Anderson	W	F	adoption administrator

Board 11A

Marion Atkins	Columbia	Lexington	W	F	adm/children's shelter
Wendy Dabney	Chapin	Lexington	W	F	court reporter
Judy Hendrix	Gilbert	Lexington	W	F	
Margie Mijares	Pelion	Lexington	W	F	foster parent

Lester Safriet	West Columbia	Lexington	W	M	engineer
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Board 11B

Almastine Butler	Saluda	Saluda	B	F	secretary
Adra Forrester	Edgefield	Edgefield	W	F	retired
Gail Nordyke	McCormick	McCormick	W	M	retired
Mary E. Ouzts	Edgefield	Edgefield	W	F	retired
John Prather	McCormick	McCormick	W	M	retired

Board 12A

Della Baker	Florence	Florence	B	F	county extension agent
Catherine Green	Effingham	Florence	B	F	retired
Jane Ketcham	Florence	Florence	W	F	nurse
Vacant		Florence			
Vacant		Florence			

Board 12B

Isabelle Bryant	Mullins	Marion	B	F	retired/education
Beatrice James	Florence	Florence	B	F	retired/education
Truman Tart	Nichols	Marion	B	M	minister
Ezekial Washington	Florence	Florence	B	M	retired
Vacant		Marion			

Board 13A

Janie Dillon	Clemson	Pickens	W	F	retired
Scott Hart	Easley	Pickens	W	M	retired
Thomas Owens	Easley	Pickens	W	M	retired
Janet Reese	Central	Pickens	B	F	retired
Elizabeth Weaver	Easley	Pickens	W	F	certified public accountant

Board 13B

Jane Daniel	Greer	Greenville	W	F	director/volunteer services
Fay Hart	Taylors	Greenville	W	F	mediator
Dorothy Kimbrell	Greenville	Greenville	W	F	homemaker
Tommy Rice	Greenville	Greenville	B	M	administration/human services
Janice Turner	Travelers Rest	Greenville	B	F	human services

Board 13C

Roberta Anderson	Greenville	Greenville	W	F	education
Jane Bondurant	Greenville	Greenville	W	F	retired
Sara Burnett	Greenville	Greenville	W	F	consultant
David Enter	Greenville	Greenville	W	M	law enforcement
Nancy Jones	Greenville	Greenville	W	F	nurse

Board 14A

Jeannine Cannington	Varnville	Hampton	W	F	retired
Jeannette Ferguson	Allendale	Allendale	W	W	homemaker
Daisy Lawton	Varnville	Hampton	B	F	guidance counselor
Norton Rosebrock	Walterboro	Colleton	W	M	minister
Vacant		Colleton			

Board 14B

Emma Jones	Pineland	Jasper	B	F	retired
Ollie McAlister	Ridgeland	Jasper	B	F	retired/human services
Thelma Miller	Beaufort	Beaufort	B	F	retired
Jessica Murphey	Hilton Head	Beaufort	W	F	sales
Bobsy Simes	Hilton Head	Beaufort	W	F	artist/oils

Board 15A

Lillie Coleman	Georgetown	Georgetown	B	F	banking
Warren Cooper	Pawleys Island	Georgetown	W	M	real estate
David Drayton	Georgetown	Georgetown	B	M	retired
Pat Schooler	Georgetown	Georgetown	W	F	optician
Vacant		Georgetown			

Board 15B

Eaddy Roe	Myrtle Beach	Horry	W	F	sales
Roszena Soles	Nichols	Horry	B	F	beautician
Patrick Mayle	Myrtle Beach	Horry	W	M	therapist
Nita Sparks	Conway	Horry	W	F	retired
Mary Gerald	Nichols	Horry	W	F	education

Board 15C

Al Fanshaw	Conway	Horry	W	M	retired
Carol Landberg	Surfside Bch	Horry	W	F	college administrator
Bernice Whittington	Conway	Horry	W	F	retired
Laura Clemmons	Conway	Horry	W	F	child development administrator

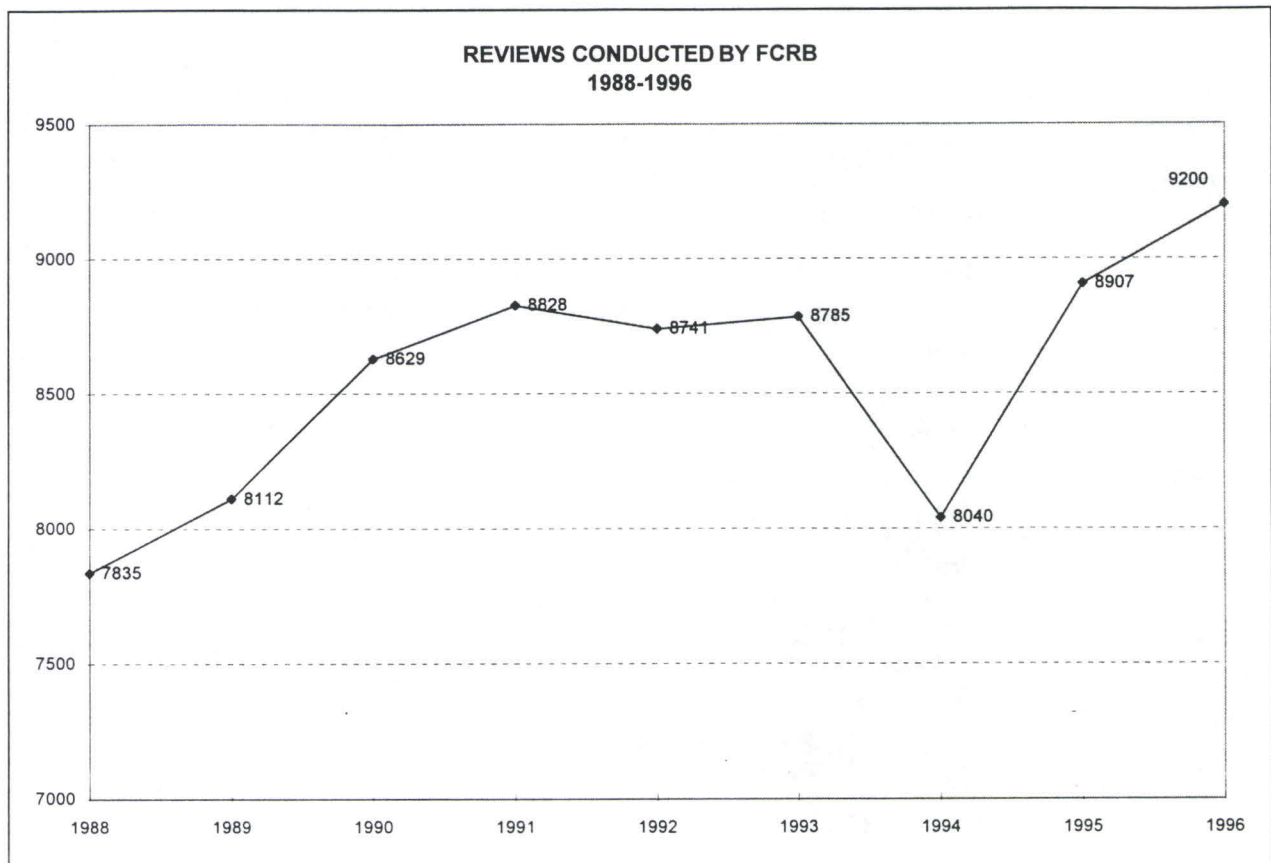
Board 16A

Nadara Andrews	Clover	York	W	F	self-employed
Sally Bloomingdale	Rock Hill	York	W	F	homemaker
Marguerite Bradley	Union	Union	W	F	retired
Dorothy Gist	Union	Union	B	F	retired/human services
Susan Langford	York	York	W	F	retired/human services

STATISTICAL INFORMATION - REVIEWS CONDUCTED BY REVIEW BOARDS
JANUARY 1, 1996 - DECEMBER 31, 1996

The Review Board conducted a total of 9,200 reviews in 1996 on a total of 5,258 children in public foster care.⁴ This is a three percent (3%) increase over the number of reviews conducted by local boards during 1995.

TABLE A

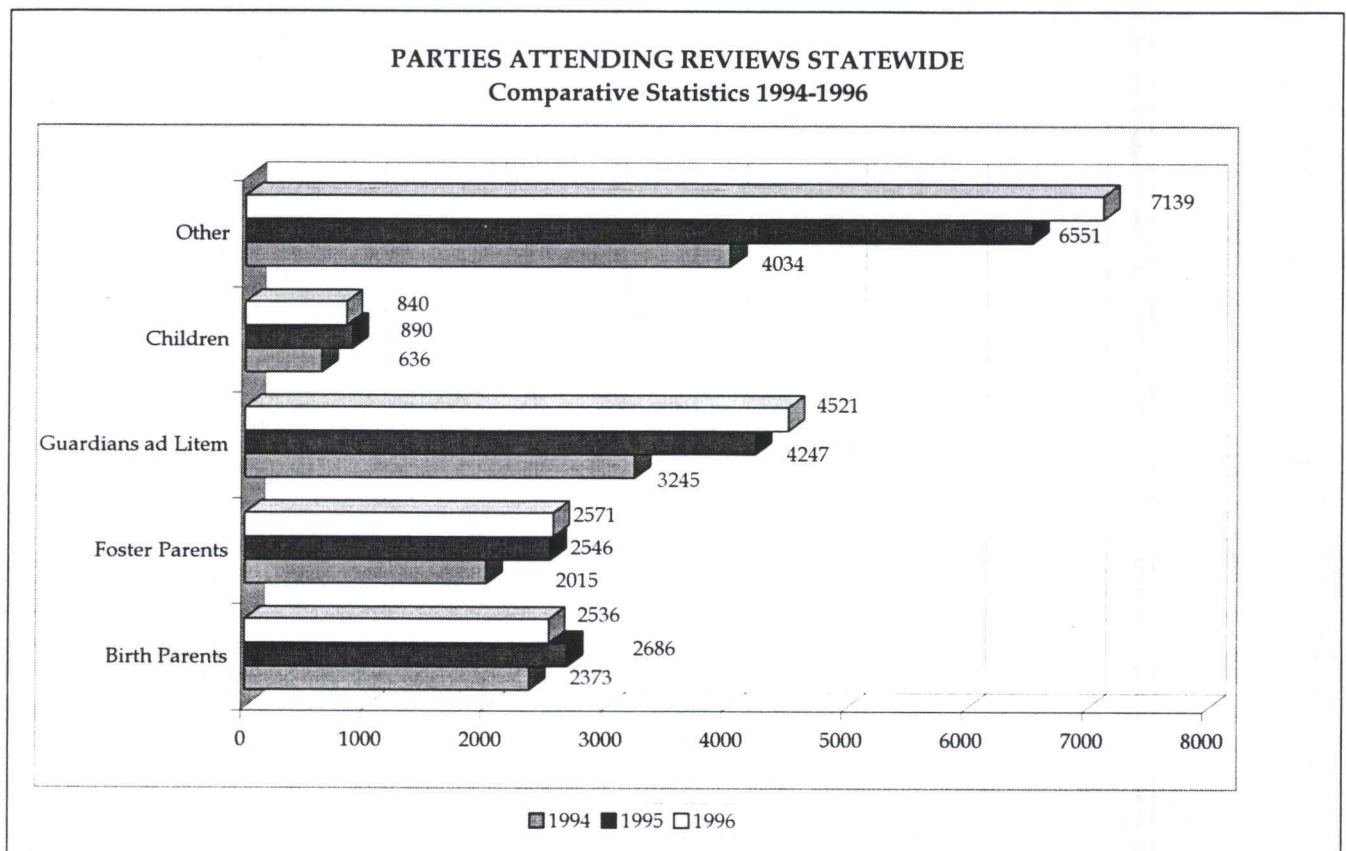


⁴ Effective January 1, 1994, children privately placed in private children's homes were no longer reviewed by the Foster Care Review Board. Statutory authority was granted to the Review Board in Proviso #6DD.39 of the Fiscal Year 93/94 budget to cease these reviews. The General Assembly believed it to be a more appropriate use of state dollars to focus reviews on the cases of children who are in the custody of the State rather than private cases.

PARTICIPATION BY INTERESTED PARTIES AT LOCAL REVIEWS

Table B compares the number of interested parties attending reviews in 1994, 1995, and 1996. During 1996, a total of 17,607 interested parties attended local review board meetings. This total reflects a four percent (4%) increase over the number of interested parties attending reviews during 1995. All interested parties who attend reviews provide the local boards with important information used to make recommendations.

TABLE B



RECOMMENDATIONS ISSUED BY LOCAL REVIEW BOARDS

Local review boards carefully consider input from all interested parties, as well as written materials prepared for the review, prior to making a recommendation on each child's case. After board members have heard from all parties present for the review, all parties are excused and the board meets privately to formulate the recommendation for the child. Board members are required by statute to consider the most appropriate permanent recommendation possible for each child. They also must determine whether all parties involved in the child's case are taking the steps necessary to achieve the plan in a timely manner.

Review boards issue a written recommendation for a permanent placement on each child reviewed. Table C describes the frequency, type and percentage for each of the eleven recommendations issued by local review boards on children reviewed during 1996.

TABLE C

STATEWIDE RECOMMENDATIONS - 1996

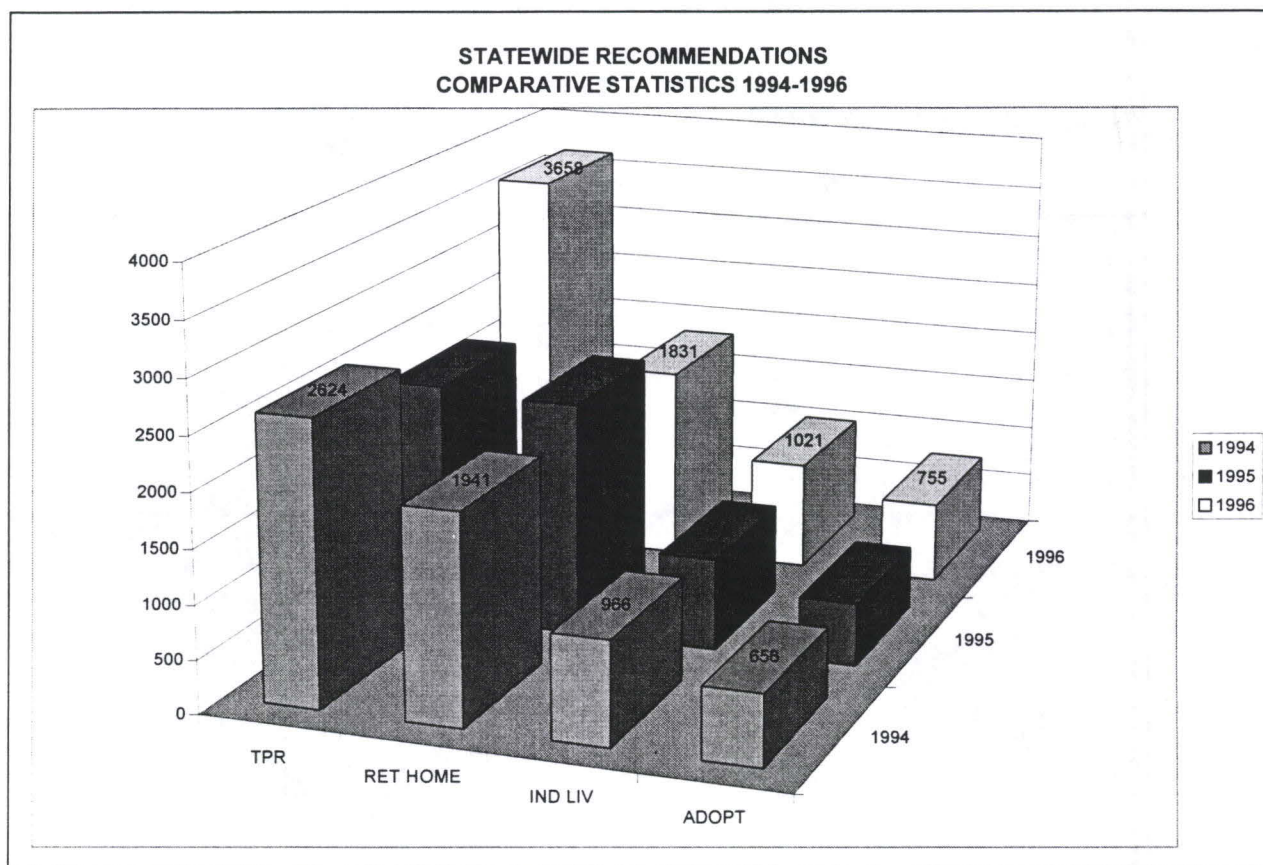
Time Period: 1/1/96-12/31/96

RECOMMENDATION	FREQUENCY	% OF TOTAL RECOMMENDATIONS
1) TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS	3,658	39.8
2) RETURN TO PARENT	1,831	19.9
3) INDEPENDENT LIVING	1,210	13.1
4) PERMANENT FOSTER CARE	1,021	11.1
5) ADOPTION	755	8.2
6) RELATIVE PLACEMENT	290	3.2
7) CASE CONTINUED	251	2.7
8) RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT	47	0.5
9) NO REVIEW	92	1.0
10) PERMANENT GROUP HOME	35	0.4
11) OTHER	10	0.1
TOTALS:	9,200	100

Table D compares the frequency of the five plans most recommended by local review boards during 1994, 1995, and 1996. Data in Table D indicates that there has been a thirty-nine percent (39%) increase in the number of recommendations for termination of parental rights when comparing 1994 and 1996 data. There has been a sixty-three percent (63%) increase in termination of parental rights recommendations from 1995 to 1996. Recommendations for return home have decreased by sixteen percent (16%) when comparing 1995 to 1996 data and

recommendations for independent living have increased by three percent (3%) for the same time periods. Recommendations for adoption increased by twenty-eight percent (28%) from 1995 to 1996.

TABLE D



AREAS OF CONCERN IDENTIFIED BY LOCAL REVIEW BOARDS

A major focus of the Division of Foster Care Review is to help systems work for children. Therefore, the identification and analysis of significant barriers or concerns which may prevent timely, permanent placement is essential. Areas of Concern are defined as violations of federal law, state law or public agency policy which have been determined by the Review Board to be significant barriers in the provision of permanency planning services to children in foster care. The Areas of Concern definitions are presented beginning on page 30 of this report.

Please note that although the Department of Social Services holds custody and service delivery responsibility for the 5,258 children in public foster care reviewed by the boards in 1996, the Department of Social Services is not responsible for all of the barriers or deficiencies mentioned in this report. Service delivery to foster children involves the complex interaction of many systems, any one of which may be a contributing factor which prolongs a child's stay in foster care.

For purposes of data analysis, the eighteen Areas of Concern tracked by the Foster Care Review Board during 1996 are divided into three categories: Legal, Program and Foster Care Review Board. Definitions of these three categories are as follows:

- 1) Legal - Violations of federal statutory requirements related to Public Law 96-272; violations of state law in regard to timeliness of court hearings and adoption proceedings; and non-compliance with court orders.
- 2) Program - Violations of programmatic policies and procedures established by public agencies related to the delivery of child welfare services. Areas of Concern in this area deal with violations of public agency policy regarding service delivery to foster children and their families. These programmatic Areas of Concern reflect inadequacies in the funding and/or delivery of services to foster children.
- 3) Foster Care Review Board - Violations of regulations related to foster care review that have been enacted by the General Assembly. The issuance of a recommendation by the Foster Care Review Board is predicated upon the receipt of appropriate information from the presenting agency; therefore, specific information to be provided for each review by the presenting agency is outlined in regulations promulgated pursuant to South Carolina Code Section 20-7-2379.

Statewide totals for each Area of Concern and associated percentages are presented on page 32 of this report. Totals and percentages for each county and area adoption office are presented on page 33.

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE/DIVISION OF FOSTER CARE REVIEW

AREAS OF CONCERN DEFINITIONS

Revised January 1996

LEGAL

1. NO TIMELY TEN DAY HEARING

SC Code Section 20-7-610

The ten day hearing was not **completed** within the 10 day time frame stipulated by law or has not been held at all.

2. NO TIMELY MERIT

SC Code Section 20-7-610
SC Code Section 20-7-736

Merit hearing was not **completed** within the 40 day time frame stipulated by law or has not been held at all.

3. NO TIMELY JUDICIAL REVIEW

SC Code Section 20-7-766
PL 96-272-Section 471(a)(16)
PL 96-272-Section 475(5)(c)

Judicial review was not **completed** within time frames stipulated by state or federal requirements or has not been held at all.

4. NON-COMPLIANCE WITH COURT ORDER

Agency is not in compliance with court order.

5. NO COURT ORDER AT REVIEW

FCRB Reg. 24-15(P)
SC Family Court Rule 26(C)

A hearing was held at least 30 days prior to the Review Board meeting and copy of the court order was not available

6. ADOPTION COMPLAINT NOT FILED TIMELY

SC Code Section 20-7-1730

Adoptive placement agreements have been signed and the adoption complaint was not filed within the time frame stipulated by law or has not been filed at all.

7. ADOPTION CONSUMMATION NOT TIMELY

SC Code Section 20-7-1760

Adoption complaint has been filed and hearing not held within the time frame stipulated by law.

8. OTHER STATUTORY VIOLATIONS (Examples)

SC Code Section 20-7-110
SC Code Section 20-7-124
SC Code Section 20-7-1570

A GAL was not appointed as required by law or the GAL was not notified of court hearings pertaining to child.

SC Code Section 20-7-1980

Child(ren) placed across state lines without full compliance with requirements of Interstate Compact.

SC Code Section 20-7-610

Non-custodial parent not notified of proceedings.

PROGRAM

9. NO CURRENT CASE PLAN

PL 96-272-Section 471(a)(16)
PL 96-272-Section 475(1)
PL 96-272-Section 475(5)(A)

A case plan was not presented to the Review Board at the time of the review, or the time frames on the most recent case plan document have expired. (If a case plan is presented, but a copy is not provided to the Review Board at the time of the review, this is cited as a policy and procedure violation.)

10. INCOMPLETE/INAPPROPRIATE CASE PLAN

PL 96-272-Section 471(a)(16)
PL 96-272-Section 475(1)
PL 96-272-Section 475(5)(A)&(B)
42 U.S.C. 675(1)

Treatment objectives were not defined in the case plan; the case plan was not signed by the parent(s) and there was no indication as to why that was not possible; other parts of the 3016 Case Plan document were incomplete; inappropriate objectives were presented in the Case Plan.

11. NO CASE PLAN WITHIN 60 DAYS

DSS Directive Memo D88-210
PL 96-272-Section 471(a)(16)
PL 96-272-Section 475(1)
PL 96-272-Section 475(5)(A)

A case plan was not initiated with the parent(s) within the first 60 days of placement as per agency policy and federal guidelines.

12. NO PROGRESS PERMANENT PLAN

PL 96-272-Section 475(5)(B)

No progress was made to achieve permanent plan within the past six months.

13. POLICY/PROCEDURE VIOLATION

Violations of DSS policies/procedures as outlined in agency policy manuals were documented during the case review.

FOSTER CARE REVIEW BOARD ISSUES

14. INTERESTED PARTIES NOT INVITED

FCRB Reg. 24-9

Review was continued because interested parties specified by Review Board regulations were not invited to the review.

15. NO THREE WEEK NOTICE TO PARTIES

FCRB Reg. 24-9

Interested parties invited to the review did not receive three weeks advance notice as required.

16. NO TIMELY FOSTER CARE REVIEW

FCRB Reg. 24-23(B)

A review was not held because the caseworker (or designated agency personnel) was not present to make a presentation to the Review Board or was not prepared to present case to the Review Board.

17. FOSTER CARE ENTRY NOT REPORTED TIMELY

FCRB Reg. 24-17(A)

Child's entry into foster care was not reported on time to schedule a timely review per statute.

18. OTHER

Case specific concerns that do not fall into above categories. These usually apply to case work issues (i.e., sibling remaining in home determined to be at risk, needs of foster child not being met, foster child not enrolled in school for unreasonable period of time).

STATEWIDE AREAS OF CONCERN
January 1, 1996 - December 31, 1996

NUMBER OF REVIEWS FOR TIME PERIOD: 9200
% TOTAL REVIEWS WITH AREAS OF CONCERN: 48.3

<u>AREA OF CONCERN</u>	<u>FREQUENCY OF AREAS OF CONCERN</u>	<u>% OF STATE TOTAL AREAS OF CONCERN</u>
<u>LEGAL</u>		
NO TIMELY TEN DAY HEARING	115	1.6
NO TIMELY MERIT HEARING	773	10.7
NO TIMELY JUDICIAL REVIEW	1336	18.5
NON-COMPLIANCE WITH COURT ORDER	257	3.6
NO COURT ORDER AT REVIEW	401	5.6
ADOPTION COMPLAINT NOT FILED TIMELY	31	0.4
ADOPTION NOT CONSUMMATED TIMELY	16	0.2
OTHER STATUTORY VIOLATIONS	25	0.3
Subtotal	2954	40.0
<u>PROGRAM</u>		
NO CURRENT CASE PLAN	126	1.7
INCOMPLETE/INAPPROPRIATE CASE PLAN	753	10.4
NO CASE PLAN WITHIN 60 DAYS	95	1.3
NO PROGRESS ON PERMANENT PLAN	237	3.3
AGENCY POLICY PROCEDURE VIOLATION	2307	32.0
Subtotal	3519	48.6
<u>FOSTER CARE REVIEW BOARD</u>		
ENTRY NOT REPORTED TIMELY	77	1.1
NO TIMELY FCRB	122	1.7
PARTIES NOT INVITED TO ATTEND	475	6.6
NO THREE WEEK NOTICE TO PARTIES	78	1.1
OTHER	1	<0.1
Subtotal	753	10.5
TOTALS:	7226	100.0

AREAS OF CONCERN
COMPARATIVE STATISTICS 1995-1996

COUNTY	% Reviews w/AOC 1995	% Reviews w/AOC 1996	# of Reviews 1995	# of Reviews 1996	COUNTY	% Reviews w/AOC 1995	% Reviews w/AOC 1996	# OF Reviews 1995	# OF Reviews 1996
ABBEVILLE	46.5%	79.3%	43	29	GREENWOOD	52.8%	39.3%	72	84
AIKEN	78.3%	67.2%	428	405	HAMPTON	37.3%	53.1%	59	49
ALLENDALE	83.3%	55.6%	48	36	HORRY	36.0%	37.0%	525	503
ANDERSON	26.6%	25.5%	354	357	JASPER	41.9%	23.5%	31	17
BAMBERG	23.3%	3.6%	73	55	KERSHAW	45.5%	42.7%	99	103
BARNWELL	36.6%	5.2%	82	58	LANCASTER	38.9%	23.1%	149	134
BEAUFORT	71.5%	62.3%	165	162	LAURENS	64.9%	52.2%	77	46
BERKELEY	72.6%	73.5%	270	310	LEE	23.1%	7.4%	52	68
CALHOUN	20.0%	32.4%	25	37	LEXINGTON	60.1%	70.8%	198	185
CHARLESTON	65.8%	73.5%	916	1010	MARION	32.9%	19.8%	140	111
CHEROKEE	47.0%	36.0%	100	86	MARLBORO	45.6%	22.4%	57	67
CHESTER	43.0%	27.8%	79	86	MCCORMICK	78.9%	7.1%	19	14
CHESTERFIELD	43.5%	24.7%	66	77	NEWBERRY	56.9%	92.3%	51	52
CLARENDON	51.9%	28.8%	131	125	OCONEE	63.9%	56.7%	133	134
COLLETON	80.9%	49.5%	136	109	ORANGEBURG	25.0%	27.7%	280	238
DARLINGTON	30.3%	41.7%	99	103	PICKENS	28.3%	33.9%	99	109
DILLON	46.8%	19.5%	77	82	RICHLAND	75.0%	55.3%	1084	1229
DORCHESTER	77.7%	59.9%	175	137	SALUDA	59.2%	22.7%	71	75
EDGEFIELD	38.9%	26.8%	72	71	SPARTANBURG	41.5%	35.9%	475	459
FAIRFIELD	13.8%	33.3%	58	63	SUMTER	59.7%	57.7%	206	267
FLORENCE	63.9%	53.2%	382	365	UNION	100%	60.0%	9	20
GEORGETOWN	51.0%	42.3%	98	111	WILLIAMSBURG	6.4%	16.7%	47	36
GREENVILLE	46.5%	35.3%	486	529	YORK	79.1%	67.9%	263	305

AREA ADOPTIONS

Area Adopt I	46.6%	46.8%	58	111	Area Adopt IV	8.9%	18.6%	56	70
Area Adopt II	42.9%	54.8%	49	115	Area Adopt V	49.3%	49.3%	69	67
Area Adopt III	17.6%	17.6%	85	102	Area Adopt VI	41.7%	17.1%	24	35

AREAS OF CONCERN BY PARTY HOLDING LEGAL CUSTODY
JANUARY 1, 1996 - DECEMBER 31, 1996

	Area I	Area II	Area III	Area IV	Area V	Area VI	Abbeville	Aiken	Allendale	Anderson	Bamberg	Subtotal
Legal												
No Timely Ten Day Hearing	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	9	0	11
No Timely Merit Hearing	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	22	5	35	1	66
No Timely Judicial Review	8	13	7	3	12	2	8	82	2	32	0	169
Non-Compliance w/Court Order	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	21	0	1	0	25
No Court Order at Review	3	5	4	1	8	0	0	12	0	9	0	42
Adopt. Complaint Not Filed	12	3	0	5	8	1	0	0	0	0	0	29
Adopt. Not Consummated Timely	1	1	2	0	9	1	0	0	0	0	0	14
Other Statutory Violations	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Subtotal	29	22	15	9	38	5	10	137	7	86	1	359
Program												
No Current Case Plan	1	17	0	0	4	0	0	37	4	0	0	63
Incomplete/Inappropriate Case Plan	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	84	2	1	0	88
No Case Plan w/in 60 Days	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	12	1	0	0	14
No Progress on Permanent Plan	0	2	0	0	4	0	0	19	4	0	0	29
Agency Policy/Proc. Violation	15	16	2	1	7	0	17	248	4	14	2	326
Subtotal	16	36	2	1	15	0	18	400	15	15	2	520
Foster Care Review Board												
Entry Not Reported Timely	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	6
No Timely FCRB	7	11	0	0	0	1	0	18	0	2	0	39
Interested Parties Not Invited	5	13	1	1	5	0	1	51	4	7	0	88
No 3 Week Notice to Parties	1	0	0	2	11	0	5	4	0	1	0	24
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal	14	26	1	3	16	1	6	76	4	10	0	157
Totals:												
Areas of Concern	59	84	18	13	69	6	34	613	26	111	3	1036
Number of Children*	81	79	80	65	47	27	19	215	23	203	34	873
Reviews of Children**	111	115	102	70	67	35	29	405	36	357	55	1382
Reviews of Children w/ Areas of Concern	52	63	18	13	33	6	23	272	20	91	2	593
% Reviews w/Areas of Concern	46.8	54.8	17.6	18.6	49.3	17.1	79.3	67.2	55.6	25.5	3.6	

*Numbers presented indicate an unduplicated count of the number of children reviewed in each county/area during the time period.

**Numbers presented indicate total number of reviews conducted for the time period. some children receive more than one review during the calendar year.

AREAS OF CONCERN BY PARTY HOLDING LEGAL CUSTODY
JANUARY 1, 1996 - DECEMBER 31, 1996

	Barnwell	Beaufort	Berkeley	Calhoun	Charleston	Cherokee	Chester	Chesterfield	Clarendon	Colleton	Darlington	Subtotal
Legal												
No Timely Ten Day Hearing	0	0	18	0	58	3	0	1	0	1	0	81
No Timely Merit Hearing	0	5	53	2	163	16	2	7	3	11	14	276
No Timely Judicial Review	2	33	76	3	315	9	7	0	26	14	7	492
Non-Compliance w/Court Order	0	25	25	0	51	0	6	0	0	15	1	123
No Court Order at Review	0	5	19	0	72	4	0	0	0	4	0	104
Adopt. Complaint Not Filed	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Adopt. Not Consummated Timely	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Other Statutory Violations	0	5	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	4	0	12
Subtotal	2	73	192	5	663	32	15	8	29	49	22	1090
Program												
No Current Case Plan	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Incomplete/Inappropriate Case Plan	0	17	18	2	103	1	2	1	5	8	10	167
No Case Plan w/in 60 Days	0	0	3	0	18	0	0	0	0	0	0	21
No Progress on Permanent Plan	0	9	14	0	66	0	0	2	0	8	2	101
Agency Policy/Proc. Violation	1	42	127	6	388	4	15	9	2	24	25	643
Subtotal	1	68	164	8	576	5	17	12	7	40	37	935
Foster Care Review Board												
Entry Not Reported Timely	0	5	11	0	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	29
No Timely FCRB	0	0	7	0	43	0	0	0	0	1	0	51
Interested Parties Not Invited	0	16	15	0	77	0	0	1	1	7	1	118
No 3 Week Notice to Parties	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	4
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal	0	21	33	0	136	0	0	2	1	8	1	202
Totals:												
Areas of Concern	3	162	389	13	1375	37	32	22	37	97	60	2227
Number of Children*	41	92	186	23	560	54	43	50	77	65	68	1259
Reviews of Children**	58	162	310	37	1010	86	79	77	125	109	103	2156
Reviews of Children w/Areas of Concern	3	101	28	12	742	31	22	19	36	54	43	1091
% Reviews w/Areas of Concern	5.2	62.3	73.5	32.4	73.5	36	27.8	24.7	28.8	49.5	41.7	

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AREAS OF CONCERN BY PARTY HOLDING LEGAL CUSTODY

JANUARY 1, 1996 - DECEMBER 31, 1996

	Dillon	Dorchester	Edgefield	Fairfield	Florence	Georgetown	Greenville	Greenwood	Hampton	Horry	Jasper	Subtotal
Legal												
No Timely Ten Day Hearing	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	8	2	13
No Timely Merit Hearing	11	11	3	1	36	6	25	14	7	45	2	161
No Timely Judicial Review	0	23	4	5	69	18	64	1	4	33	0	221
Non-Compliance w/Court Order	0	3	0	1	5	1	6	0	0	0	0	16
No Court Order at Review	0	6	0	3	12	3	15	1	2	28	0	70
Adopt. Complaint Not Filed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Adopt. Not Consummated Timely	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other Statutory Violations	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	3
Subtotal	11	43	7	10	123	28	111	18	15	114	4	484
Program												
No Current Case Plan	0	2	0	0	1	0	19	0	0	4	0	26
Incomplete/Inappropriate Case Plan	0	13	0	6	23	2	32	3	6	26	0	111
No Case Plan w/in 60 Days	0	1	0	0	2	0	6	0	0	7	2	18
No Progress on Permanent Plan	0	0	0	0	2	4	8	4	0	7	0	25
Agency Policy/Proc. Violation	6	45	14	9	103	14	71	14	8	92	2	378
Subtotal	6	61	14	15	131	20	136	21	14	136	4	558
Foster Care Review Board												
Entry Not Reported Timely	0	2	0	0	0	2	4	0	0	0	0	8
No Timely FCRB	0	5	0	0	3	0	8	0	0	0	0	16
Interested Parties Not Invited	0	4	1	2	10	13	19	1	1	15	0	66
No 3 Week Notice to Parties	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal	0	11	1	2	13	15	31	1	1	16	0	91
Totals:												
Areas of Concern	17	115	22	27	267	63	278	40	30	266	8	1133
Number of Children*	48	87	37	39	203	60	313	51	36	291	12	1177
Reviews of Children**	82	137	71	63	365	111	529	84	49	503	17	2011
Reviews of Children w/ Areas of Concern	16	82	19	21	194	47	187	33	26	186	4	815
% Reviews w/Areas of Concern	19.5	59.9	26.8	33.3	53.2	42.3	35.3	39.3	53.1	37	23.5	

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AREAS OF CONCERN BY PARTY HOLDING LEGAL CUSTODY
JANUARY 1, 1996 - DECEMBER 31, 1996

	Kershaw	Lancaster	Laurens	Lee	Lexington	Marion	Marlboro	McCormick	Newberry	Oconee	Orangeburg	Subtotal
Legal												
No Timely Ten Day Hearing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
No Timely Merit Hearing	12	6	0	2	16	3	4	1	3	14	18	79
No Timely Judicial Review	9	4	8	0	39	7	0	0	8	23	9	107
Non-Compliance w/Court Order	0	1	0	0	1	0	6	0	11	1	2	22
No Court Order at Review	9	8	0	0	17	3	1	0	3	8	4	53
Adopt. Complaint Not Filed	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Adopt. Not Consummated Timely	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other Statutory Violations	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	4
Subtotal	30	19	8	2	74	13	11	1	27	49	33	267
Program												
No Current Case Plan	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	4
Incomplete/Inappropriate Case Plan	3	0	3	0	35	1	0	0	21	27	13	103
No Case Plan w/in 60 Days	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	2	0	5
No Progress on Permanent Plan	5	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	6	4	1	22
Agency Policy/Proc. Violation	7	17	21	3	71	7	6	0	92	18	27	269
Subtotal	16	17	24	3	114	8	6	0	121	53	41	403
Foster Care Review Board												
Entry Not Reported Timely	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	4
No Timely FCRB	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	4
Interested Parties Not Invited	6	0	4	0	27	0	0	0	13	8	5	63
No 3 Week Notice to Parties	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	9	0	0	11
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Subtotal	6	0	5	0	32	0	0	0	25	10	5	83
Totals:												
Areas of Concern	52	36	37	5	220	21	17	1	173	112	79	753
Number of Children*	54	80	27	44	110	64	40	10	29	89	151	698
Reviews of Children**	103	134	46	68	185	110	67	14	52	134	238	1151
Reviews of Children w/ Areas of Concern	44	31	24	5	131	22	15	1	48	76	66	463
% Reviews w/Areas of Concern	42.7	23.1	52.2	7.4	70.8	19.1	22.4	7.1	92.3	56.7	27.7	

*Numbers presented indicate an unduplicated count of the number of children reviewed in each county/area during the time period.

**Numbers presented indicate the total number of reviews conducted for the time period; some children receive more than one review during the calendar year.

AREAS OF CONCERN BY PARTY HOLDING LEGAL CUSTODY
JANUARY 1, 1996 - DECEMBER 31, 1996

	Pickens	Richland	Saluda	Spartanburg	Sumter	Union	Williamsburg	York	Subtotal	GRAND TOTAL
Legal										
No Timely Ten Day Hearing	0	4	0	1	0	0	0	4	9	115
No Timely Merit Hearing	10	76	0	35	28	0	0	42	191	773
No Timely Judicial Review	4	163	7	47	65	1	2	58	347	1336
Non-Compliance w/Court Order	0	53	0	2	5	3	0	8	71	257
No Court Order at Review	0	66	0	4	5	5	2	50	132	401
Adopt. Complaint Not Filed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	31
Adopt. Not Consummated Timely	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	16
Other Statutory Violations	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	25
Subtotal	14	366	7	89	103	9	4	162	754	2954
Program										
No Current Case Plan	0	18	0	0	4	0	0	8	30	126
Incomplete/Inappropriate Case Plan	2	197	3	25	24	2	0	31	284	753
No Case Plan w/in 60 Days	0	16	0	6	9	0	0	6	37	95
No Progress on Permanent Plan	0	41	0	18	0	0	0	1	60	237
Agency Policy/Proc. Violation	15	477	4	62	52	0	2	80	692	2308
Subtotal	17	749	7	111	89	2	2	126	1103	3519
Foster Care Review Board										
Entry Not Reported Timely	0	22	3	0	1	0	0	4	30	77
No Timely FCRB	2	9	0	0	0	1	0	0	12	122
Interested Parties Not Invited	7	65	1	18	18	0	0	31	140	475
No 3 Week Notice to Parties	0	37	0	0	1	0	0	0	38	78
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Subtotal	9	133	4	18	20	1	0	35	220	753
Totals:										
Areas of Concern	40	1248	18	218	212	12	6	323	2077	7226
Number of Children*	63	689	43	264	160	14	24	179	1436	5258
Reviews of Children**	109	1229	75	459	266	20	36	305	2499	9200
Reviews of Children w/ Areas of Concern	37	680	17	165	153	12	6	207	1277	4439
% Reviews w/Areas of Concern	33.9	55.3	22.7	35.9	57.5	60	16.7	67.9		48.3

*Numbers presented indicate an unduplicated count of the number of children reviewed in each county/area during the time period.

**Numbers presented indicate the total number of reviews conducted for the time period; some children receive more than one review during the calendar year.

ADVOCACY - CASE REFERRAL PROCESS

Review Board coordinators may initiate personal follow-up on cases in their assigned caseloads. Data for 1996 indicates that 625 children received individual attention from coordinators on specific issues following reviews. In addition to the individual follow-up done by review board coordinators, the Division of Foster Care Review operates a three-tiered referral process to facilitate additional advocacy efforts on behalf of children reviewed by local review boards. The ability of local review boards to advocate individually on behalf of children in foster care in South Carolina is vital to the overall effectiveness of the Review System.

Legal Referrals

The Review Board employs a full-time attorney to operate as General Counsel for the Review Board. Any legal action recommended by the local review board must be initiated by the State Review Board Office and is subject to approved policies and procedures. Local review boards refer any cases they feel necessary on behalf of a child to the State Office staff for assessment. Through participation in Family Court hearings and individual legal follow-up on cases reviewed, the Review Board is able not only to educate, but also to advocate with judges, attorneys, and other individuals who may impact the child's case. General Counsel for the Division is active with various groups who work to draft legislation on children's issues and functions as legal counsel to all local review boards and the State Board.

Administrative Referrals

The Division of Foster Care Review seeks to resolve issues through administrative channels if at all possible prior to seeking Family Court intervention. The Project Administrator position is used to facilitate a large part of the follow-up necessary on individual cases. Letters, telephone calls, case staffings and other administrative functions are handled by this position in an effort to resolve issues of concern to local review boards.

Therapeutic/Medicaid Referrals

The Division of Foster Care Review operates a quality assurance review system for emotionally disturbed Medicaid eligible children who reside in residential treatment placements. The program was initiated pursuant to a contract with the Department of Health and Human Services and has been operational since April 1992. Local review boards who have concerns about the quality of treatment, or the appropriateness of a therapeutic placement may make a referral to the Medicaid Review Specialist. The Medicaid Review Specialist may arrange a separate Medicaid staffing with appropriate parties, or conduct additional inquiries relative to the case.

During 1996, Review Board staff made post-review referrals and advocacy efforts on a total of 1,429 children. This number indicates that follow-up advocacy efforts were made on twenty-seven percent (27%) of the children active in the system during this time period. Table F describes the number and type of administrative referrals made by local review boards during 1996.

TABLE F

RBC Follow-Up	625
Legal	374
Administrative	298
Therapeutic/Medicaid	132
TOTAL	1,429

DEMOGRAPHIC AND COMPARATIVE DATA

POPULATION OF FOSTER CHILDREN REVIEWED BY THE

DIVISION OF FOSTER CARE REVIEW

January 1, 1996 through December 31, 1996

**SUMMARY STATISTICS - SELECTED VARIABLES
COMPARATIVE DATA 1995 - 1996**

Review Data	1995	1996	Variance
Children Reviewed	5128	5258	3% increase
Number of Reviews	8907	9200	3% increase
Children w/ AOC	54.90%	48.30%	7% decrease
Descriptive Data			
White	1744	1745	.5% increase
Black	3241	3367	4% increase
Other	143	146	2% increase
Male	2542	2630	3% increase
Female	2586	2628	2% increase
Placements Related to Substance Abuse	510	435	14% decrease
Reviews of Children in Therapeutic Medicaid Placements	2269	2228	2% decrease
FCR System Data			
Children Entering System	1019	945	7% decrease
<u>Placement Reasons</u>			
Neglect	542	507	6% decrease
Abuse	293	274	6% decrease
Voluntary	83	38	54% decrease
Abandonment	28	27	4% decrease
Dependency	46	70	52% increase
Juvenile Offense	14	22	57% increase
Relinquishment	13	7	46% decrease
Length of Time in Care			
Active Cases	3 years	3 years	no change
Children Leaving Care	1273	1495	17% increase
Closure Reasons	565	651	15% increase
Adoption*	213	222	4% increase
Emancipation	270	276	2% increase
Relative/Non Parent**	223	337	51% increase
Other	8	2	75% decrease
Deceased	6	7	17% increase
Length of Time in Care			
Closed Cases	2.7 years	2.6 years	3.7% decrease

* Of those children adopted during 1996, 218 spent longer than 12 months in foster care prior to being adopted.

** Of those children leaving care to go to relative/non-parent in 1996, 192 spent longer than 12 months in foster care prior to leaving care.

**DEMOGRAPHIC AND COMPARATIVE DATA
ON THE POPULATION OF FOSTER CHILDREN**

**REVIEWED BY THE
DIVISION OF FOSTER CARE REVIEW**

JANUARY 1, 1996 - DECEMBER 31, 1996

Who are the children reviewed by the Foster Care Review Board?

During 1996, 945 children entered the system and had their first review, 1,495 left foster care and 5,258 children were active in the system. Data presented in the following tables presents descriptive information on children reviewed by their ages, race and sex.⁵

Statistical Comparison by Age

Tables A, B, and C compare the number of children in select age groups who entered the Review Board System, the number who left the system, and the number of children who remained active in the Review Board System during 1996.

Table A shows that most of the children entering the foster care system during 1996 were between the ages of ten and fifteen. Table B indicates that this age group also was the largest group active in the foster care system. However, Table C shows that children in the system older than sixteen left foster care in the largest numbers, indicating that children in the ten to fifteen-year-old grouping may be staying in the system until they reach the age of majority rather than being placed in a permanent home.

⁵ The Division of Foster Care Review implemented an in-house computer information system in 1987. Each year changes and revisions are made, as necessary, in data collection methods in order to enhance the system and to provide better utilization of data. Questions related to data comparison should be referred to the Governor's Office, Division of Foster Care Review.

TABLE A

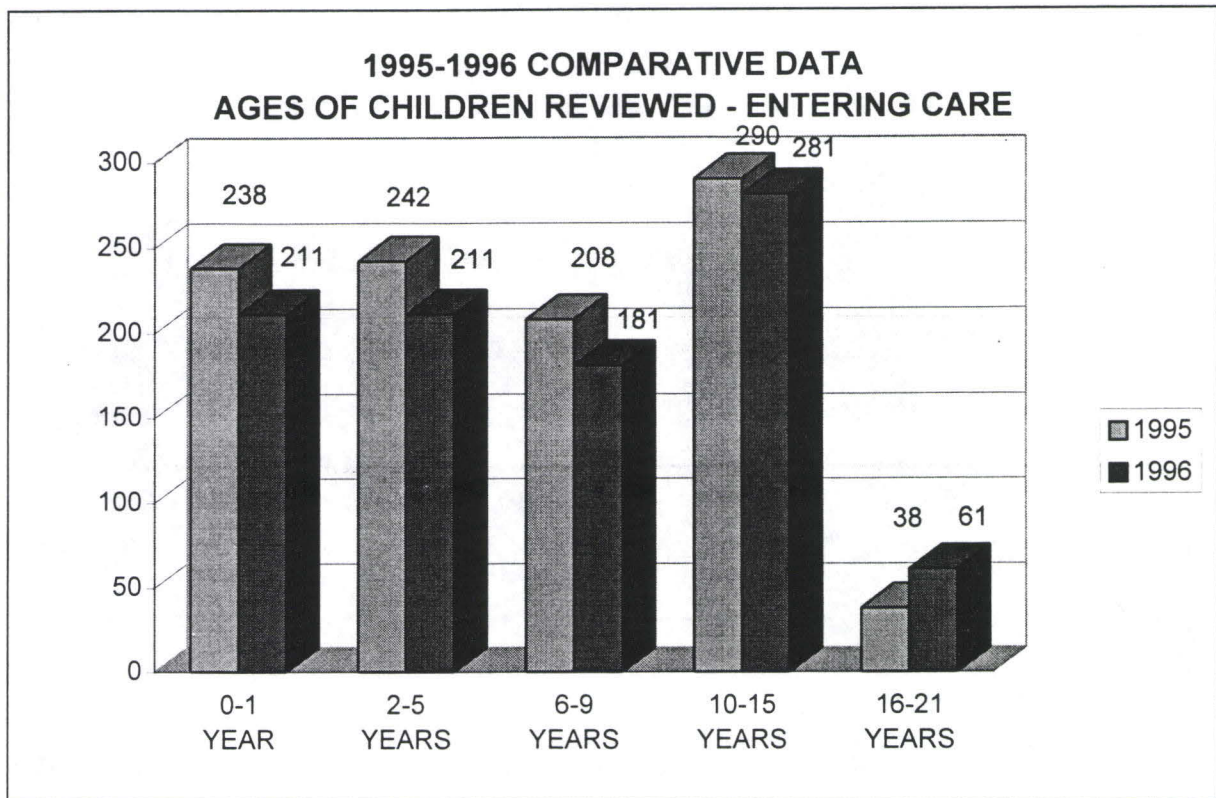


TABLE B

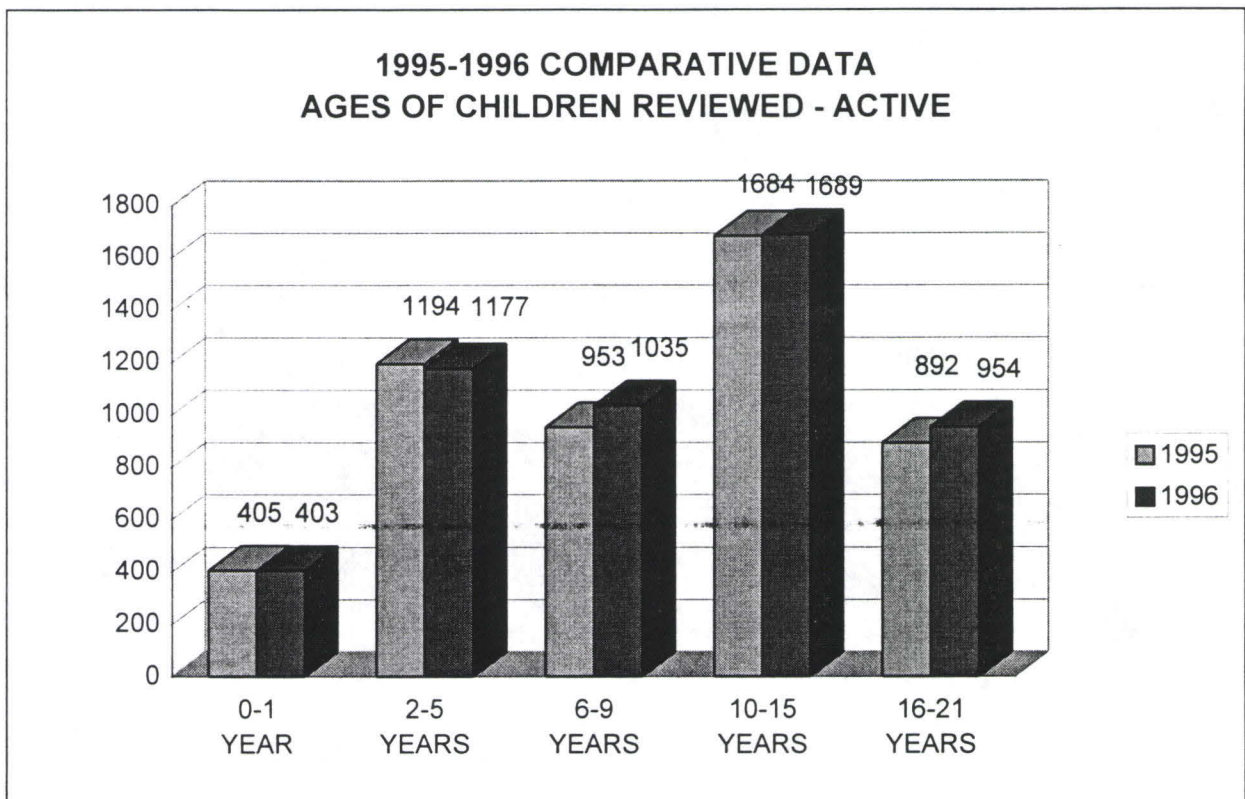
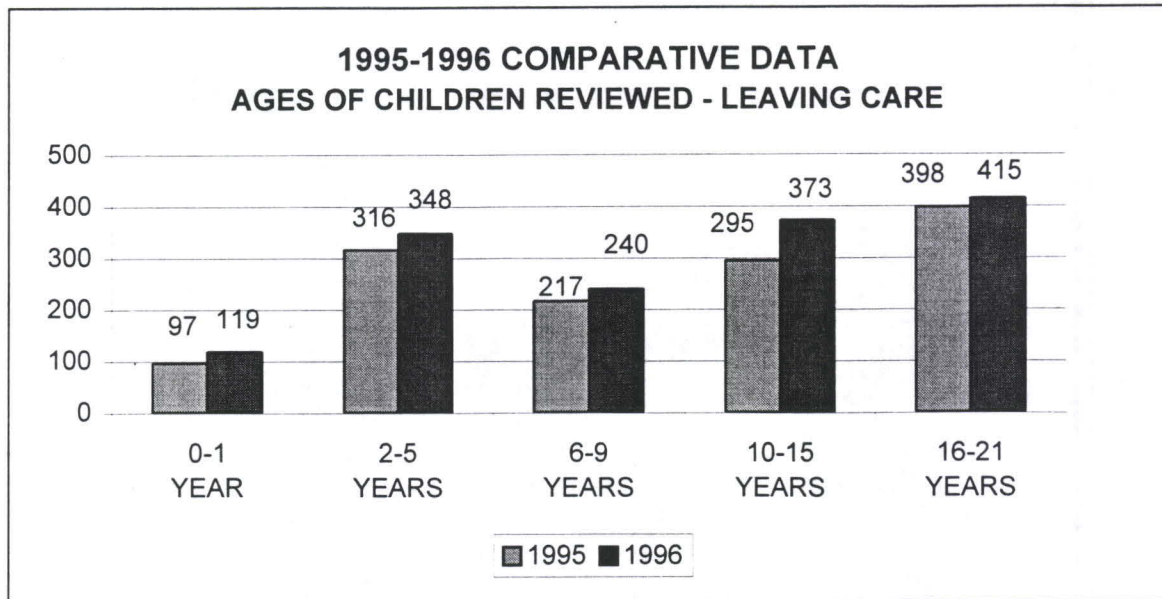


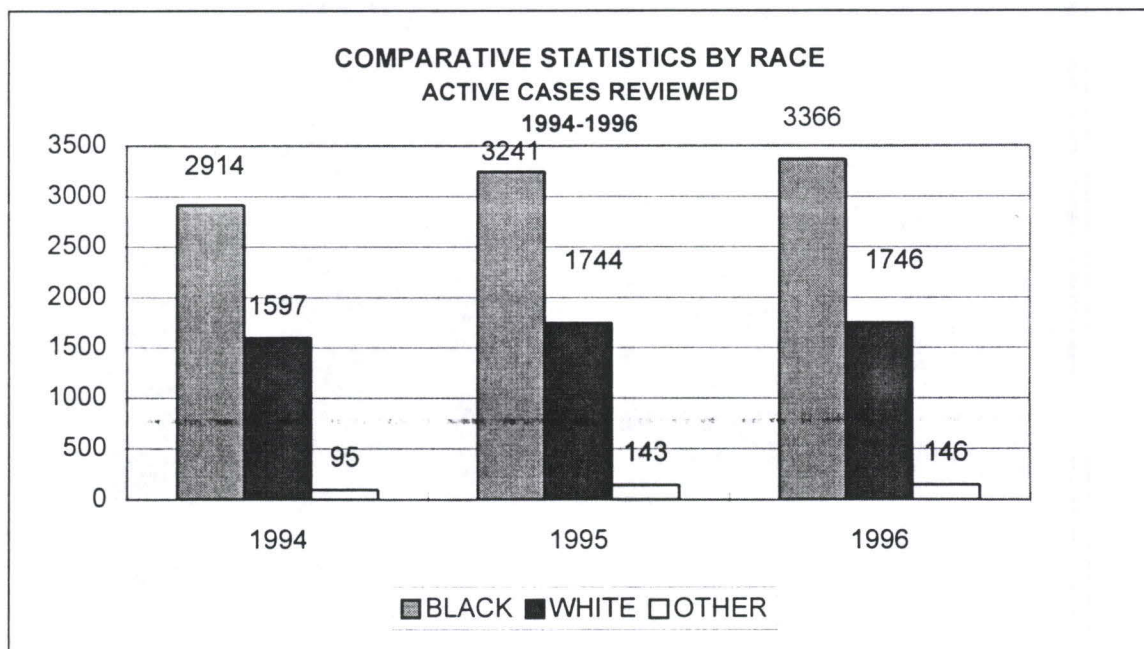
TABLE C



Statistical Comparison by Race

Table D depicts the race of children who were reviewed and remained active during 1994, 1995, and 1996. These statistics show a sixteen percent (16%) increase in the number of black children active in the system when comparing 1994 and 1996 data. Data for 1996 indicates that sixty-four percent (64%) of the children active in the foster care population are black, thirty-three percent (33%) are white and three percent (3%) are of other races or biracial.

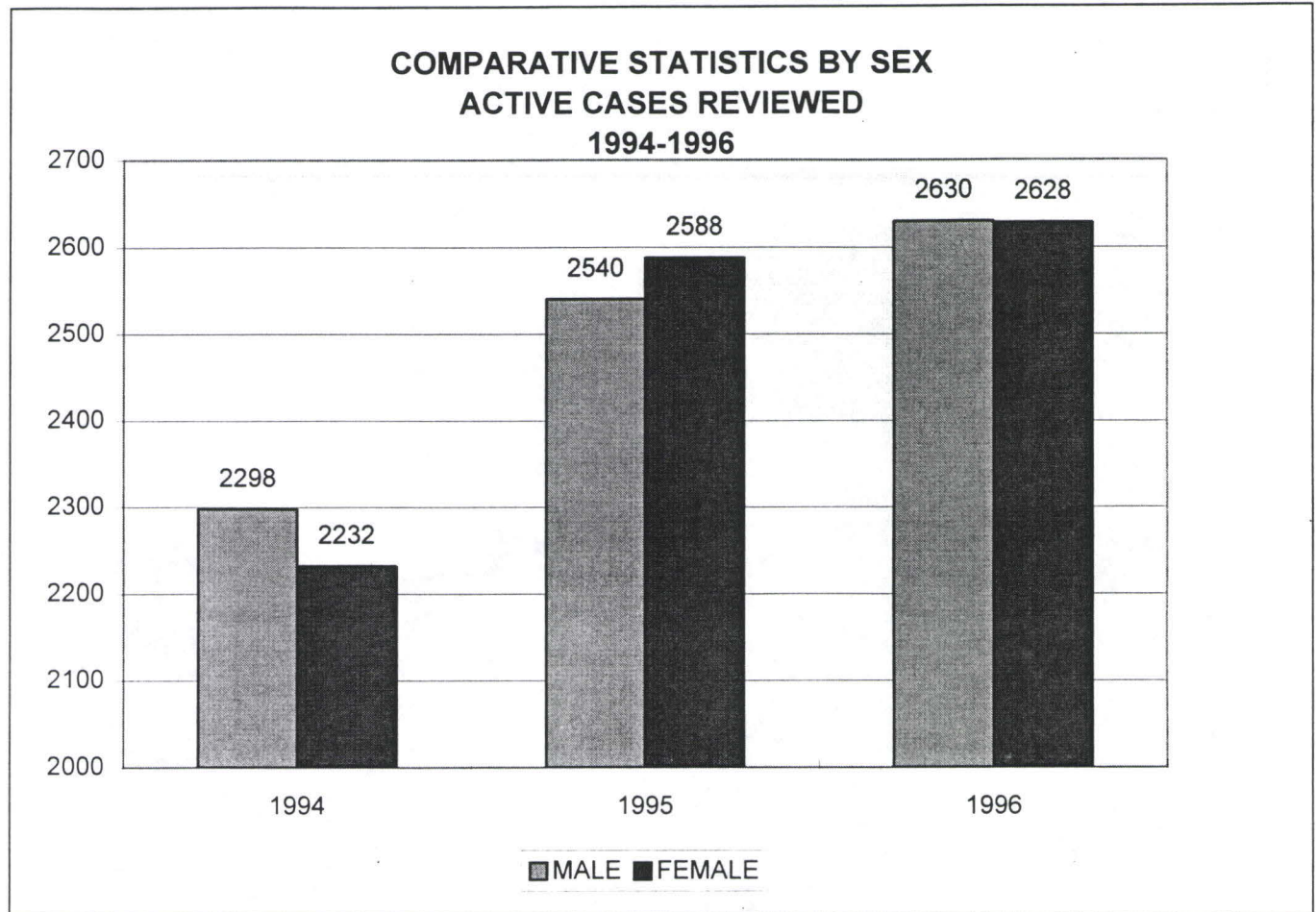
TABLE D



Statistical Comparison by Sex

Table E depicts the sex of children who were reviewed and remained active during 1994, 1995, and 1996. As in previous years, the percentage of males and females active in the foster care population is almost equal.

TABLE E



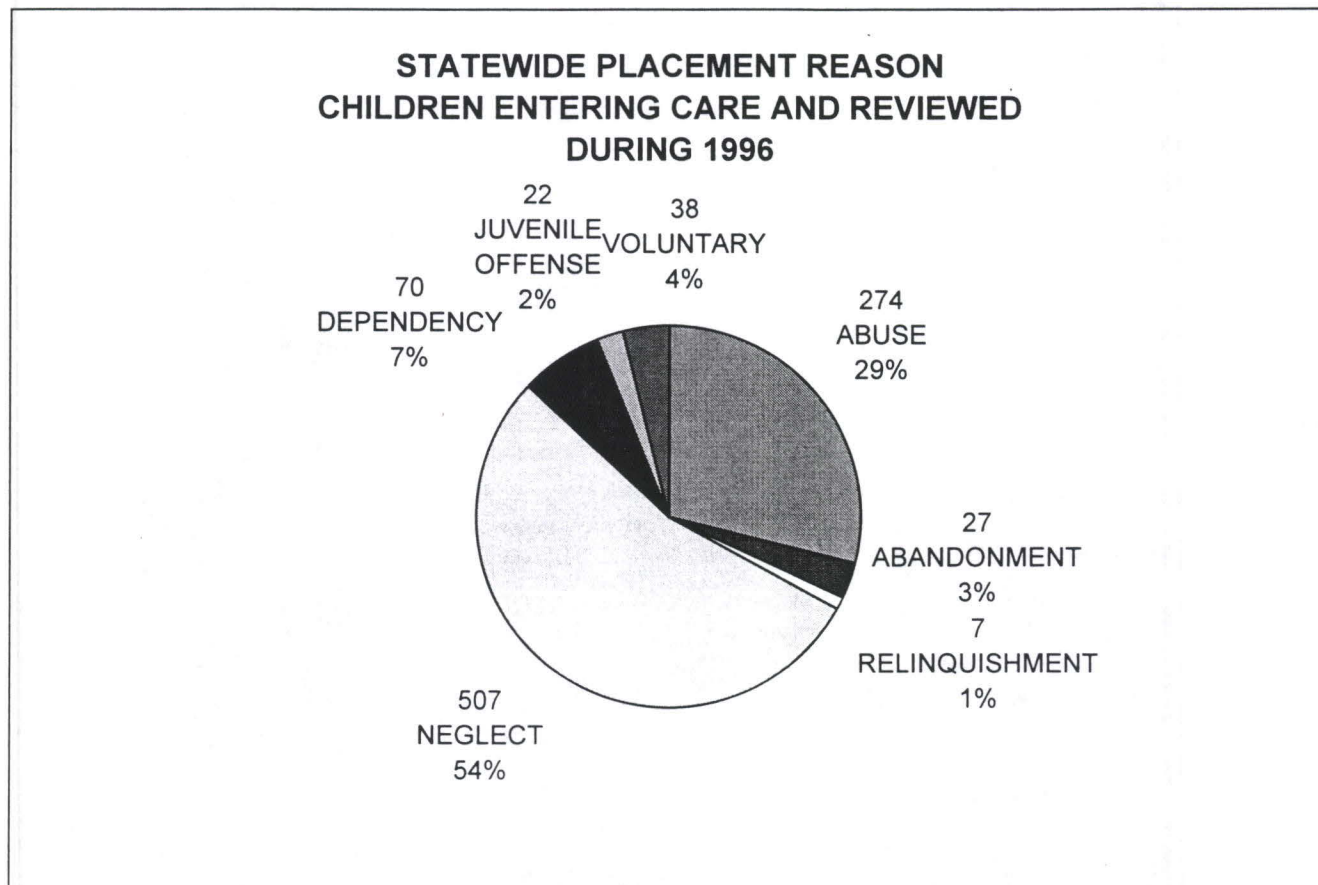
Why are children placed in foster care in South Carolina?

The Foster Care Review Board is legally mandated to review all children who have been in public foster care for a period of more than four consecutive months. Children placed in public foster care become wards of the state through a Family Court action with legal custody being held by the Department of Social Services.

During 1996, children reviewed in South Carolina entered foster care in one of the four following ways: 1) Ninety-three percent (93%) were placed involuntarily through the Family Court as a result of neglect, abuse, abandonment or dependency; 2) four percent (4%) were voluntarily placed by their custodial parents; 3) two percent (2%) entered as a result of a juvenile offense; and 4) one percent (1%) were voluntarily relinquished for the purpose of adoption.

Table F presents statewide data on the percentage for each type of placement. The percentage of children described in Table F combines the categories of physical abuse, sexual abuse and emotional abuse.

TABLE F



The individual categories for each type of abuse are designated with associated percentages in Table G. Statistical data generated by the Review Board annually continues to indicate that neglect, at fifty-four percent (54%), continues to be the most frequent reason for placement of children in foster care in South Carolina.

Data for 1996 indicates a twenty-eight percent (28%) increase in the number of children placed in foster care due to sexual abuse. This is the largest increase in this category in a number of years and will be closely monitored by the Review Board.

TABLE G
STATEWIDE PLACEMENT REASONS FOR
CHILDREN ENTERING FOSTER CARE - 1996*

Time Period: 1/1/96-12/31/96

PLACEMENT REASON	FREQUENCY	% OF TOTAL PLACEMENTS
1) NEGLECT	507	53.6
2) ABUSE/PHYSICAL	123	12.9
3) THREAT/PHYSICAL	47	5.0
4) ABUSE/SEXUAL	74	7.8
5) THREAT/SEXUAL	24	2.5
6) ABUSE/EMOTIONAL	4	0.4
7) ABANDONMENT	27	2.9
8) DEPENDENCY	70	7.4
9) VOLUNTARY	38	4.0
10) RELINQUISHMENT	7	0.7
11) JUVENILE OFFENSE	22	2.3
TOTALS	945	100

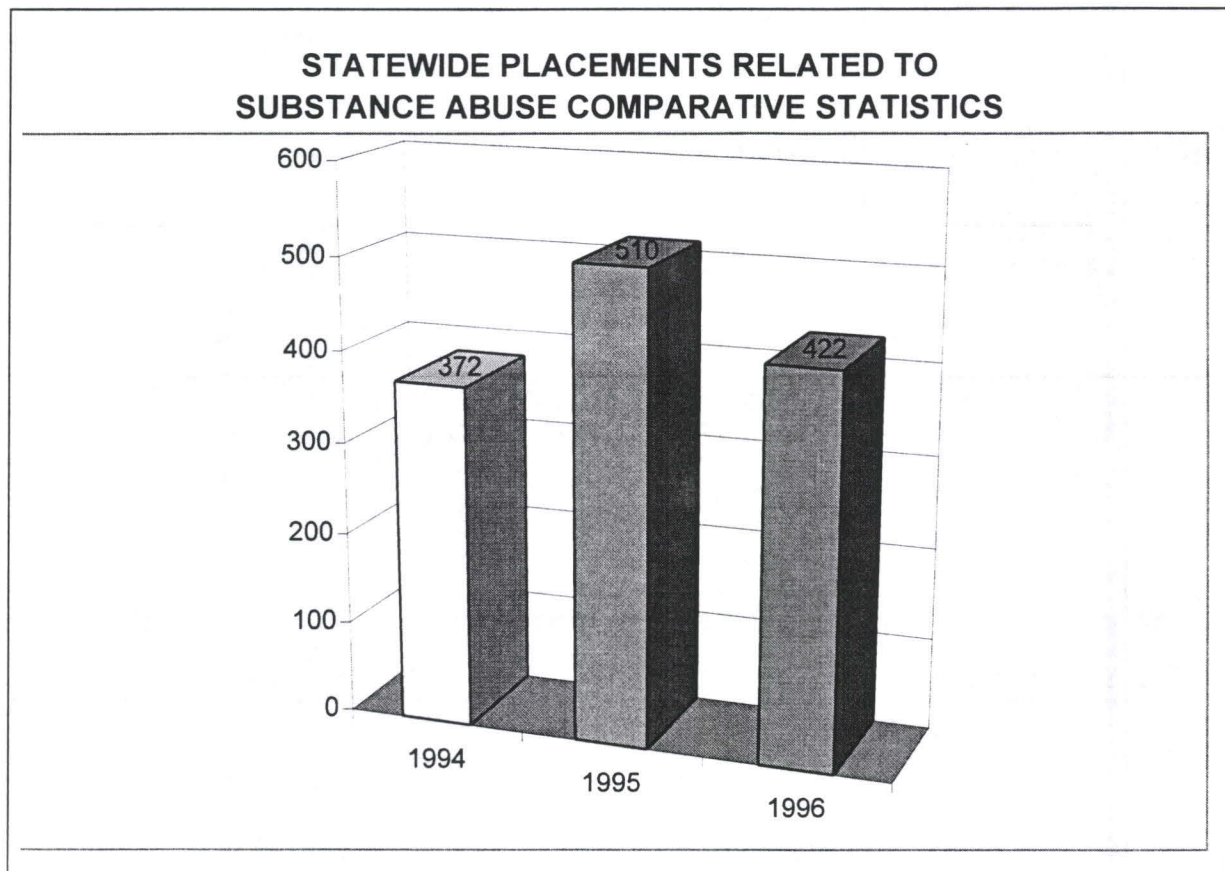
*Reflects only children reviewed by the Review Board for the first time during 1996.

How many children in the foster care system are affected by substance abuse ?

The number of substance abuse related placements of children in the foster care system has been tracked statistically by the Review Board since 1990. Substance abuse continues to be a significant factor in the reasons children are placed in foster care in 1996. Review Board data for 1996 indicates that substance abuse was a contributing factor in the placements for 435 (46%) of the 945 children who entered foster care and were reviewed for the first time during 1996.

Table H reflects the number of children affected by substance abuse and reviewed by the Review Board from 1994 to 1996.

TABLE H



The 1995-96 Annual Report compiled by the South Carolina Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services (DAODAS) indicates that approximately 215,000 South Carolinians are currently experiencing problems with alcohol and other drugs that warrant intervention and treatment. More than 19,000 of these individuals are between the ages of twelve and seventeen.

The following are examples of problems related to alcohol and other drug abuse in South Carolina.

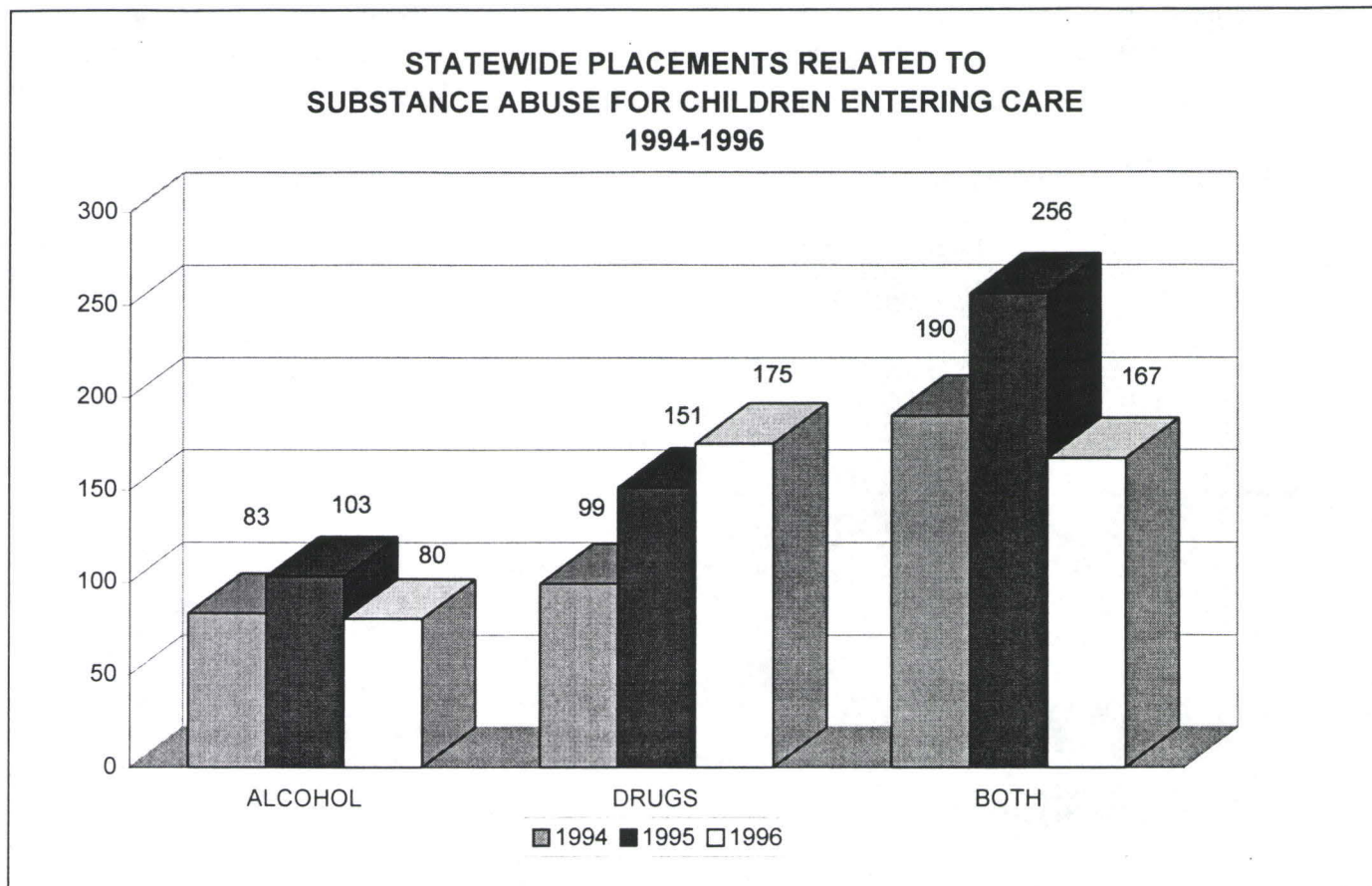
- One in four South Carolinians experiences family problems related to alcohol or other drug abuse.
- Child abuse and neglect, incest, domestic violence, suicides, homicides and homelessness are a few of the many problems that can be linked to alcohol and other drug abuse.
- More than 150,000 babies are born each year in South Carolina to mothers who used alcohol or illegal or non-prescribed drugs during pregnancy. This represents roughly one in every four babies born in this state each year.
- Alcohol-related accidents and illnesses account for 11% of all deaths in South Carolina each year. ⁶

⁶

1995-96 Annual Report. South Carolina Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services

Data presented in Table I describes the children entering foster care during 1996 whose placements were affected by substance abuse. Table I provides a breakdown on the type of substance abuse involved in the placement. The Review Board divides these into three categories: alcohol, drugs or both. Data for 1996 indicates that there has been a sixteen percent (16%) increase in the number of children whose placement in foster care was related to drug abuse.

TABLE I



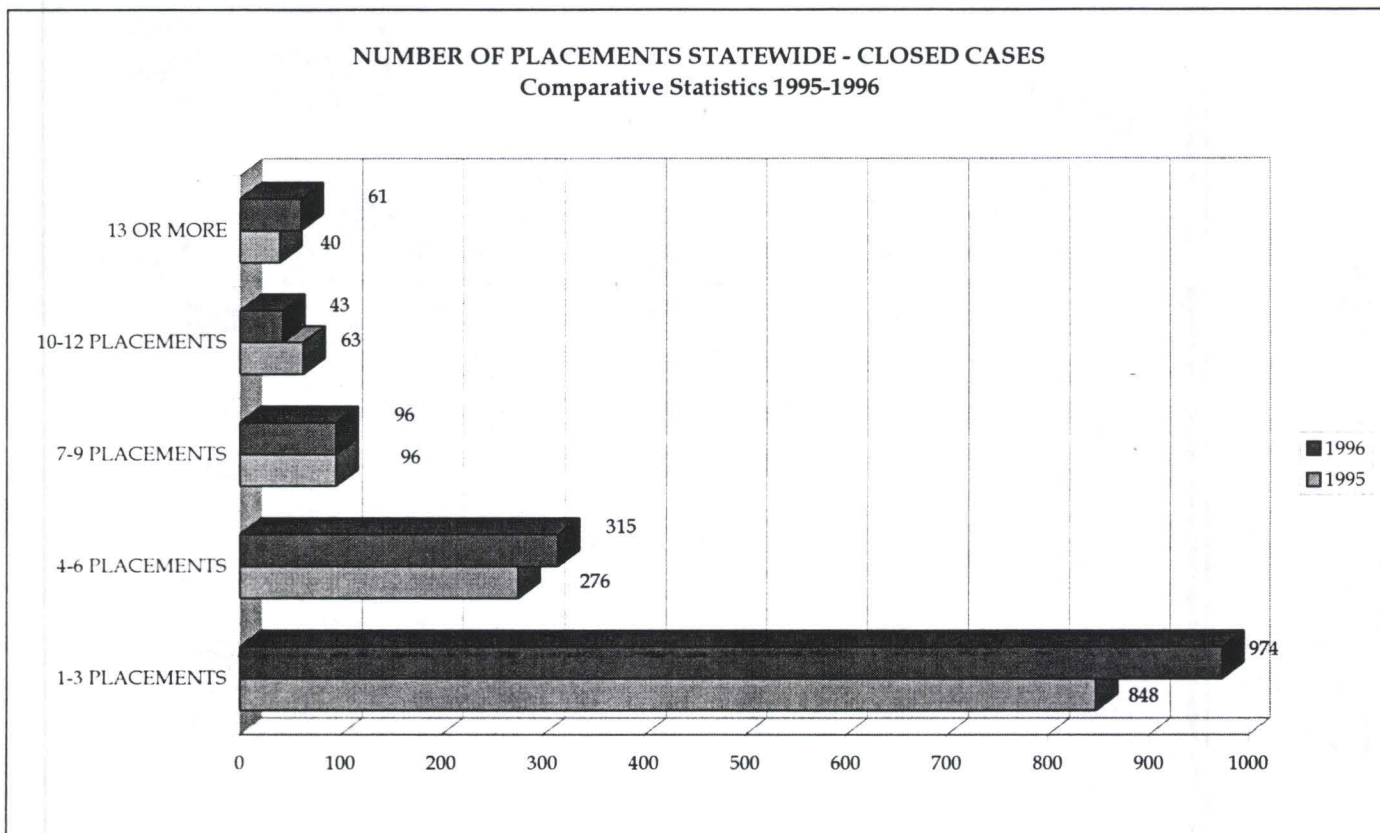
How many placements did children leaving care in 1996 experience?

Children removed from their families and placed in foster care frequently experience more than one placement while in care. Research shows the initial placement in foster care is extremely traumatic for a child and additional moves once in the foster care system can be very detrimental to the child's development. The younger the child, the more critical the need for stability in one home becomes.

1996 data indicates that more than one-fourth of the children in foster care (28%) experienced between four and nine different foster care placements. The Review Board has noted a six percent (6%) increase in the number of children who go through 7-9 different placements and a twenty-three percent (23%) increase in the number of children experiencing between 10 - 12 different placements. The most alarming number in this category shows that there has been a fifty-three percent (53%) increase in the number of children who experience more than 13 moves while in foster care. These increases are noted when comparing 1995 and 1996 data.

Table J compares the number of placements experienced by children reviewed during 1996. This data indicates that the majority of children in foster care experience between one and three different placements while in foster care.

TABLE J



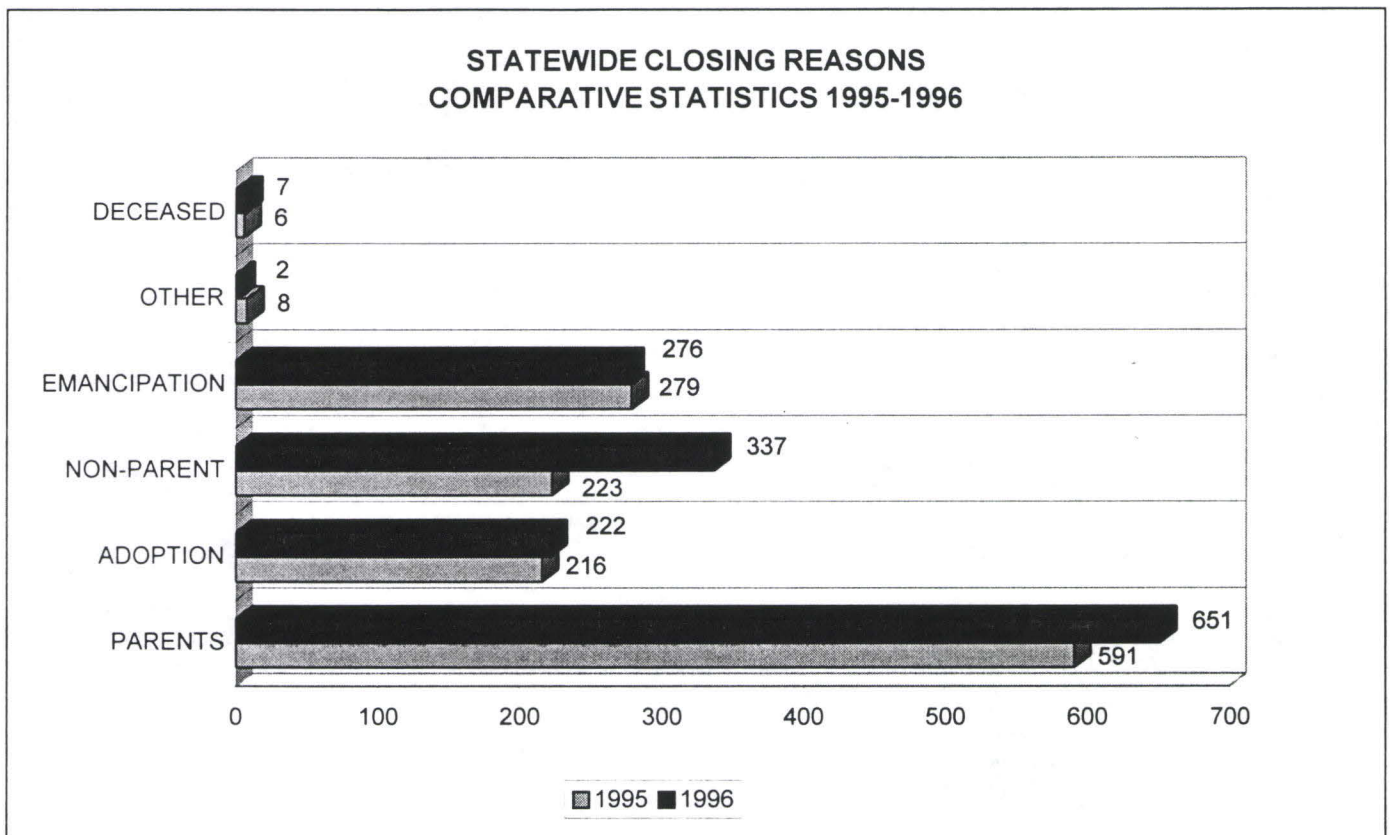
Where do children go when they leave foster care?

The number of children in the Review Board system that left care in 1996 was 1,495. Forty-four percent (44%) of these children were returned to their parents. Fifteen percent (15%) were legally adopted, twenty-three percent (23%) had legal custody transferred to relatives or other individuals and nineteen percent (19%) left the system by emancipation. Two children (<1%) died during 1996 and less than one percent of those leaving the system during 1996 left for other reasons than the five categories tracked by the Review Board.

Table K compares the number of children leaving foster care in 1996 to the number of children leaving in each category during 1995. Data for 1996 indicates that less than fifty percent of children who leave the foster care system are returned home to their birth parents. Children are placed with non-parents or relatives and emancipated at almost the same percentage rate as those who are returned home. When compared to 1995 data, there was a fifty-one percent (51%) increase in the number of children who went to non-parents or relatives in 1996.

Adoption, the only other legal permanent plan for children besides returning to birth parent(s), accounts for only fifteen percent (15%) of the remaining fifty-six percent (56%) who do not return to their parents. Data for 1996 indicates a three percent (3%) increase in the number of children adopted when comparing 1995 and 1996 figures.

TABLE K



How long do children stay in the foster care system?

A major goal of foster care review is to achieve a permanent placement for a child as soon as possible; therefore, it is important to measure the amount of time a child spends in care. Review Board data for 1996 shows that the average length of time that a child spends in foster care has decreased from 3.10 years in 1988 to 2.6 years in 1996. This is a slight decrease from 1995 data that showed 2.7 years as the average length of time spent in foster care.

Do children return to foster care once they leave?

There is very little longitudinal data to document what happens to children once they leave the foster care system. Review Board data for 1996 indicates that thirteen percent (13%) of the children who remained active in the system as of December 31, 1996, had left and returned to foster care at least one time.

1996 THERAPEUTIC MEDICAID PLACEMENT DATA

The Division of Foster Care Review operates a quality assurance review system for emotionally disturbed Medicaid eligible children who reside in residential treatment placements. This program was initiated pursuant to a contract with the Department of Health and Human Services and has been operational since April 1992.

Since the inception of the Interagency System for Caring for Emotionally Disturbed Children (ISCEDC) and Managed Treatment Services (MTS), the number of children in Medicaid funded therapeutic placements has continued to decline. Local ISCEDC teams, composed of representatives from the county Departments of Social Services (DSS), DSS Managed Treatment Services, the Department of Mental Health, the Department of Disability and Special Needs, the Department of Juvenile Justice and local school districts provide and review records and collectively select children who are truly in need of placement in Medicaid funded therapeutic placements. For each child identified as appropriate for placement in a therapeutic environment, the team designates one agency to coordinate and monitor their services.

The majority of children in Medicaid funded therapeutic placements are managed by the MTS division of DSS. The client to staff ratio is much smaller than that of regular DSS, and MTS staff are trained to work specifically with emotionally disturbed children. These factors allow for more effective and efficient treatment of children in Medicaid funded placements.

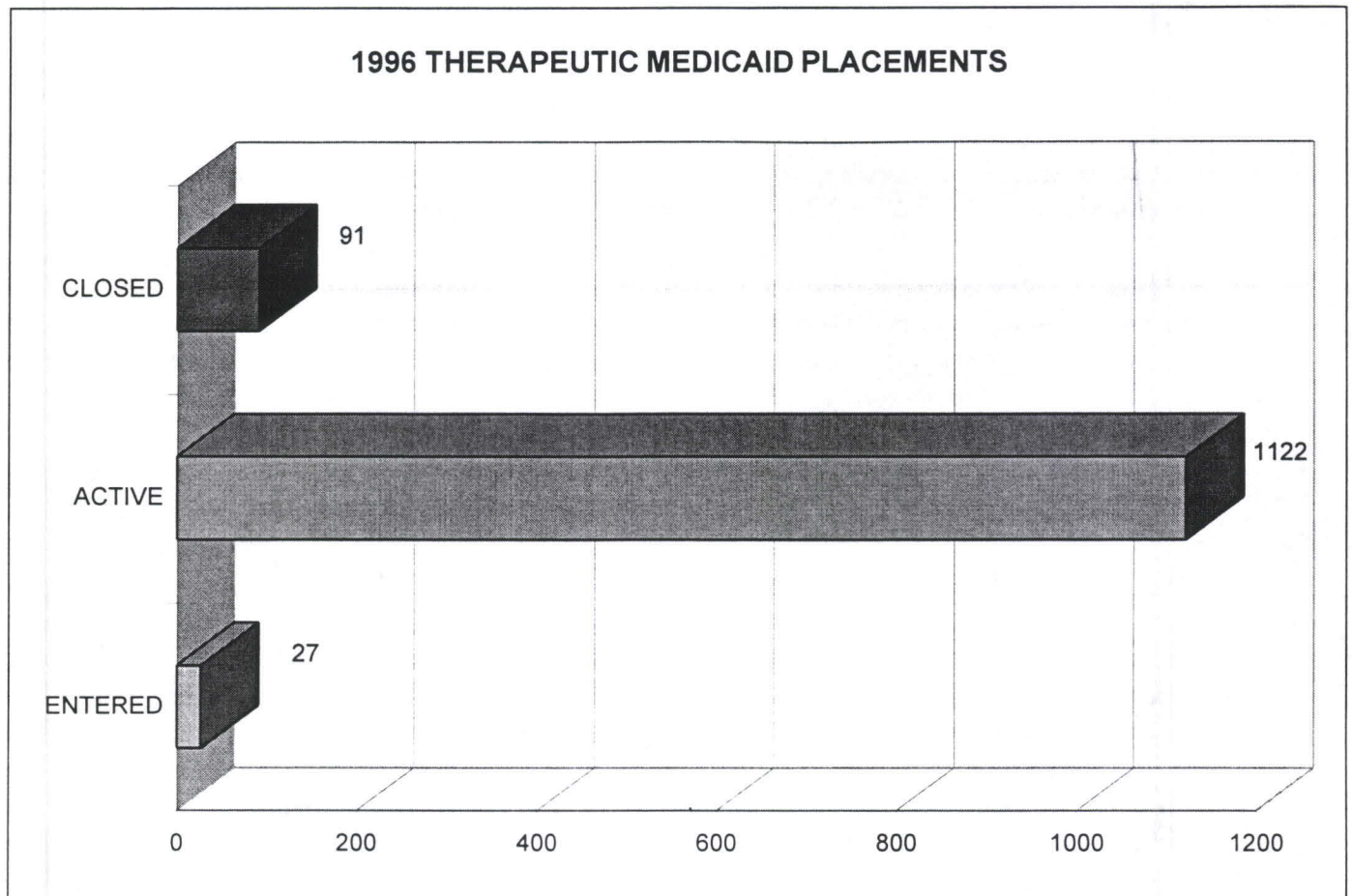
The establishment of ISCEDC and MTS have both contributed significantly to the decline in the number of children placed in Medicaid funded therapeutic placements. Data presented throughout this section reflect the overall reduction of children in special placements.

The goals of the Medicaid Review System are to: ensure that placement of emotionally disturbed Medicaid eligible children under the age of twenty-one (21) in residential treatment is appropriate; ensure that the level of care provided to each child is offered in the least restrictive environment appropriate to meet the child's treatment needs; make certain that the parties responsible for the care, supervision and treatment of the child regularly communicate with one another and evaluate the child's progress and continuing need for treatment; and, ensure that permanency planning is addressed as a part of the child's therapeutic treatment plan. This system was incorporated into the current structure of the Review Board and provides regular six month review for all children in public foster care residing in therapeutic placements and tracks progress towards achievement of case management goals for each child.

Children in therapeutic placements funded by Medicaid represent twenty-four percent (24%) of the total number of active children reviewed by local boards during 1996. During 1996, local review boards conducted a total of 2,228 reviews on a total of 1,122 children residing in Medicaid funded therapeutic placements. This is an eleven percent (11%) decrease in the number of children reviewed in Medicaid funded therapeutic placements when compared to 1995 data. Statewide efforts to improve screening and acceptance procedures have been effective in reducing the population in this category.

Table L presents data as to the number of children in therapeutic placements who entered care, left care, and remained active during the 1996 time period.

TABLE L



The Review Board reviews children in several different types of therapeutic placements funded by Medicaid. These placements run from the least restrictive therapeutic foster home setting to inpatient hospitalization for severely emotionally disturbed children. Table M describes the number and percentage of children in each of the different types of Medicaid placements tracked by the Review Board.

TABLE M

**1996 THERAPEUTIC MEDICAID PLACEMENTS
STATEWIDE LOCATION TYPE**

LOCATION TYPE	NUMBER	% OF STATE PLACEMENTS
Therapeutic Foster Home	657	59%
High Management Group Home	156	14%
Moderate Management Group Home	137	12%
Residential Treatment Program	82	7%
Inpatient Treatment Hospital	39	4%
Supervised Independent Living	27	2%
Crisis Stabilization Program	24	2%
TOTAL	1,122	100%

The next three tables (Tables N, O, and P) compare the number of children in therapeutic placements by selected age groups. Tables present information on the children who entered the foster care system, children who were active in the foster care population during 1996, and children who left the foster care system during 1996.

As in the regular foster care population, Table N indicates that the largest number of children in the therapeutic population leave care in the sixteen to twenty-one year age bracket. Data presented in Table O indicates that the largest population of active children in the system who are in Medicaid therapeutic placements are between the ages of ten and fifteen. This parallels the data on children in the regular foster care population.

TABLE N

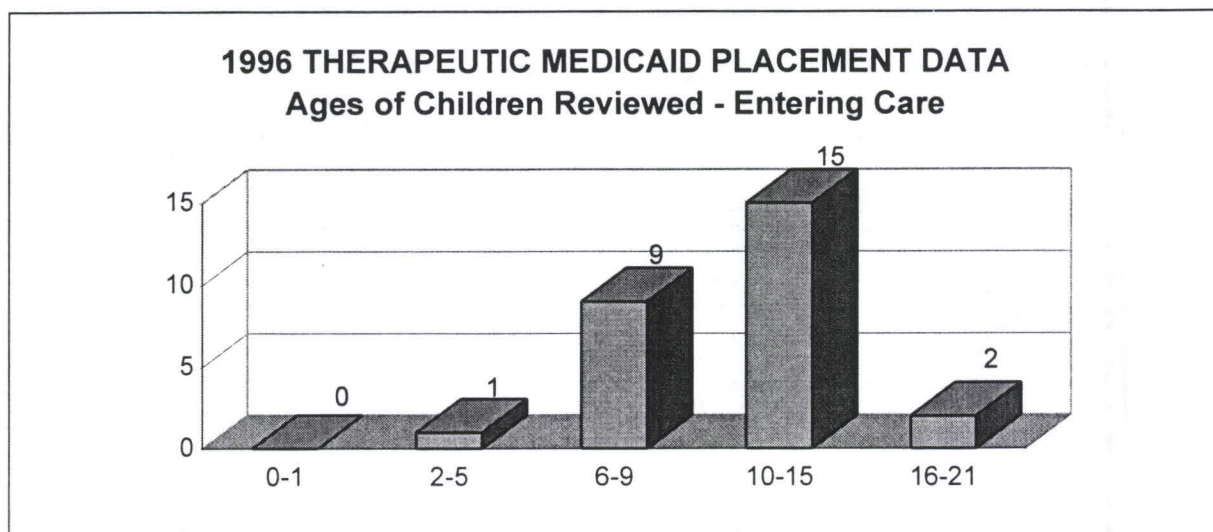


TABLE O

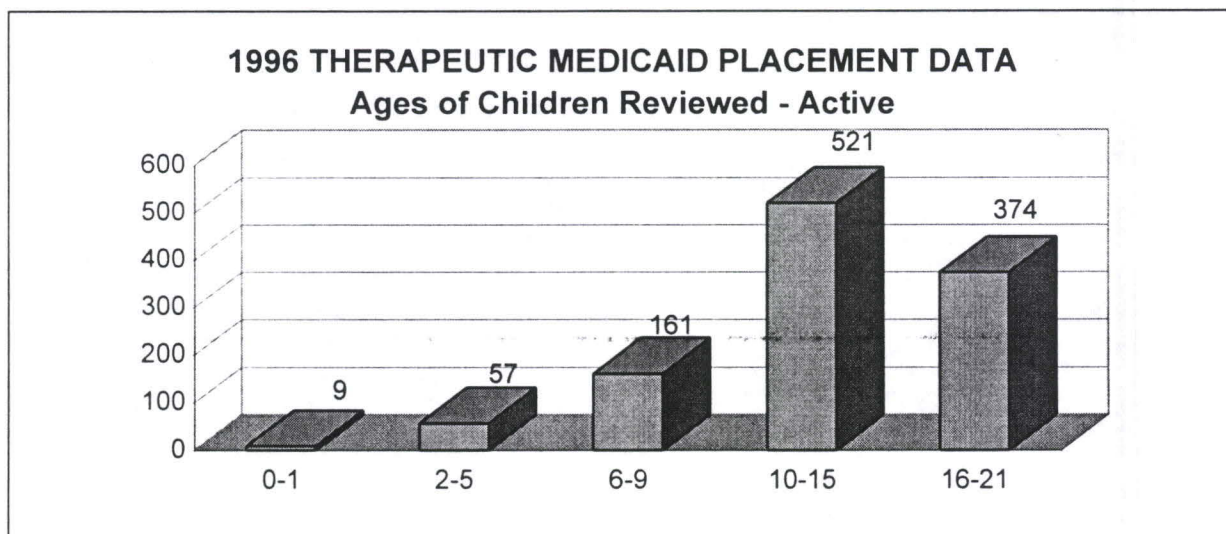


Table P depicts the age of children in therapeutic placements who left care during 1996. When considered as a separate population, the percentage of children who emancipate out of therapeutic placements, thirty-six percent (36%), is double the percentage of the children who emancipate out of the general foster care population (18%).

TABLE P

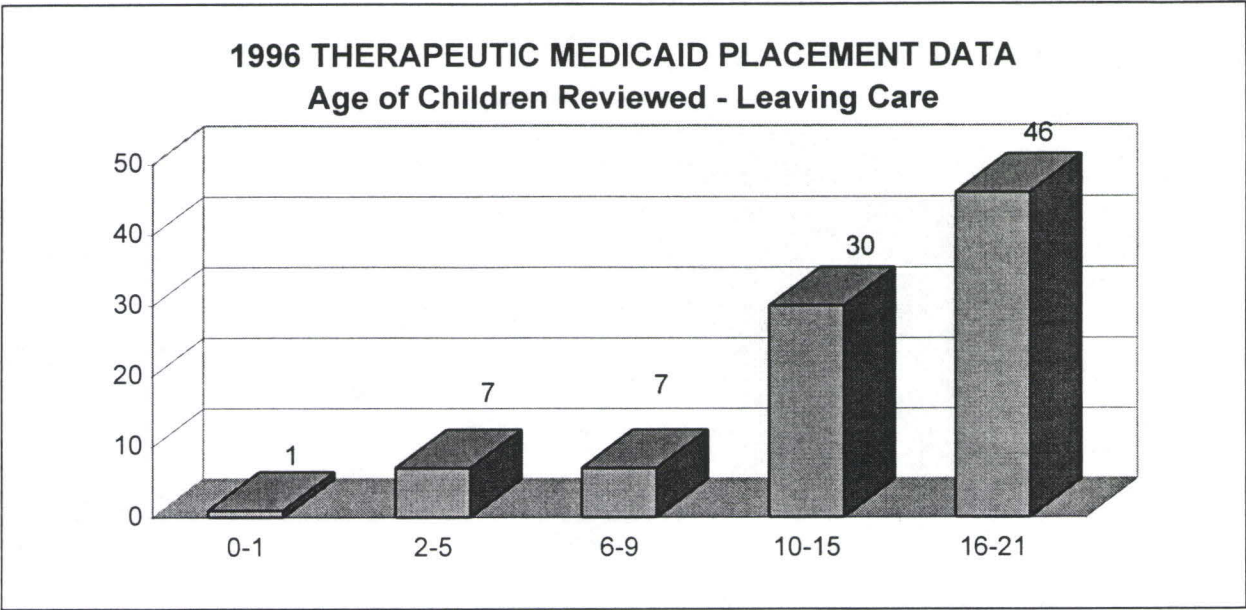


Table Q describes the sex of children in therapeutic placements. This data is outlined in three categories: 1) children entering care; 2) children active in the system; and, 3) children leaving the therapeutic system. A difference in this population as compared to the general foster care population is that there is a higher percentage of males in the active therapeutic population as compared to females. In the general foster care population, the percentage of children of each sex is almost equal. Data for 1996 also indicates that the difference between the number of males and females in the therapeutic population has grown larger when compared to 1995 data. However, the rate at which males and females enter the therapeutic system remains almost equal.

TABLE Q

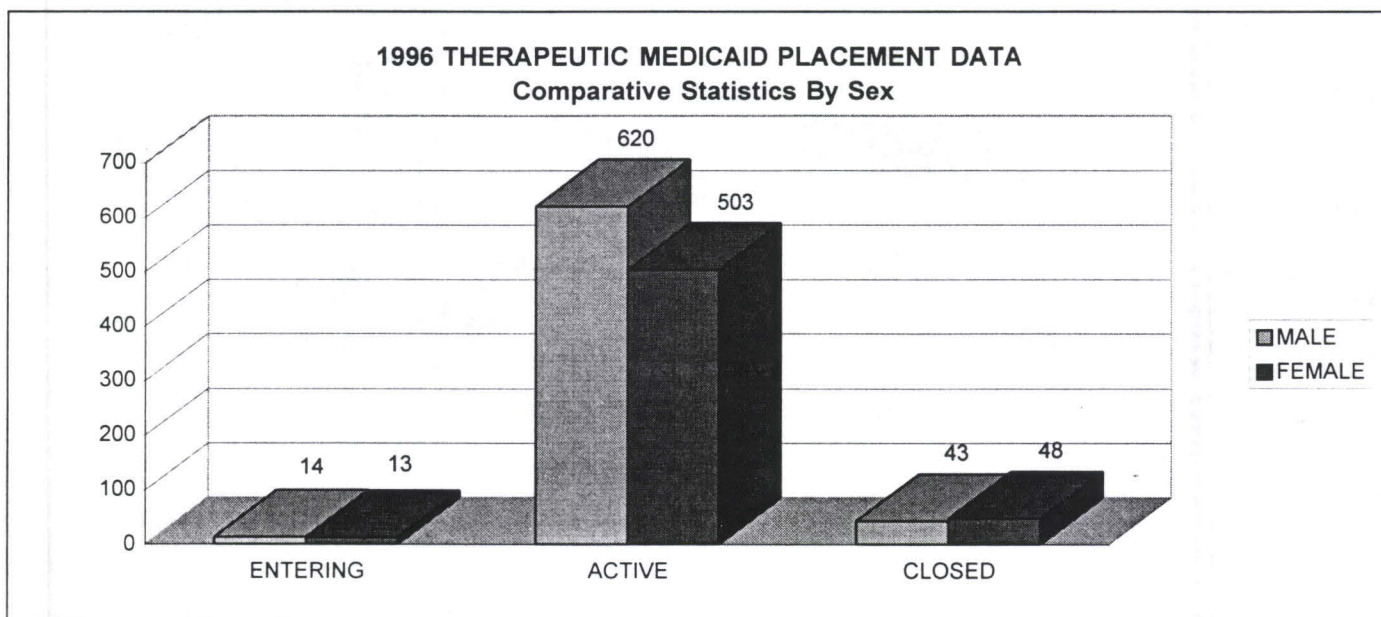
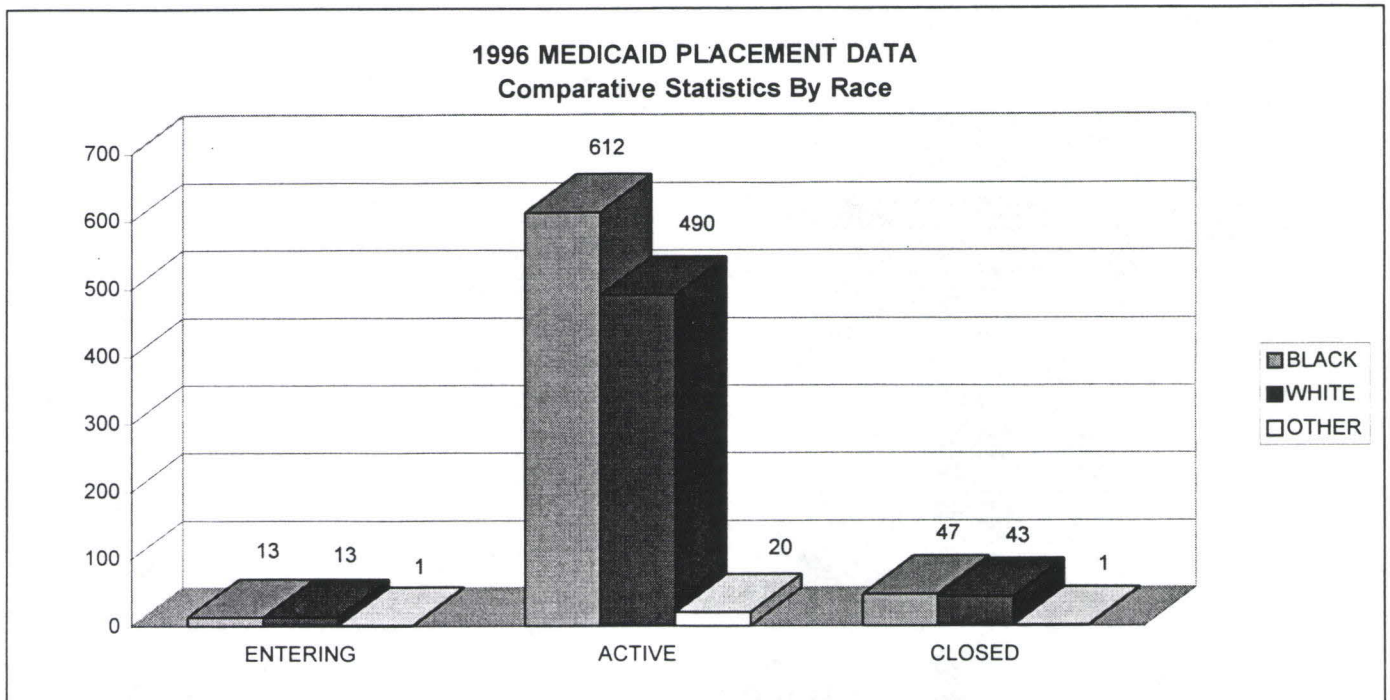


Table R describes the racial breakdown of children in therapeutic placements. This data indicates that fifty-four percent (54%) of the children active in the therapeutic population are black. When compared with the breakdown by sex in Table Q, it appears that while the racial and sexual balance of children entering and leaving the system are almost equal, black males remain active in the therapeutically placed population at a higher rate than females.

TABLE R



The number of foster care placements experienced by children in therapeutic settings must be carefully monitored by those responsible for case management. Any move for a child can have long lasting, dramatic effects and these effects can be critically compounded when considering a child with emotional problems. Stability should be a primary focus of the treatment process for children in therapeutic settings. These children, more than any others reviewed by the Review Board, will need the security and guidance a permanent family can provide.

Data presented in Table S indicates the number of different placements that children placed therapeutically who left care in 1996 experienced. The percentage of therapeutically placed children experiencing between four and nine placements was almost double the percentage of children in the regular foster care population with the same number of placements. Children in therapeutic placements leaving care during 1996 averaged a slightly longer length of time in foster care (3.3 years) than those leaving care in the regular foster care population (2.6 years).

TABLE S

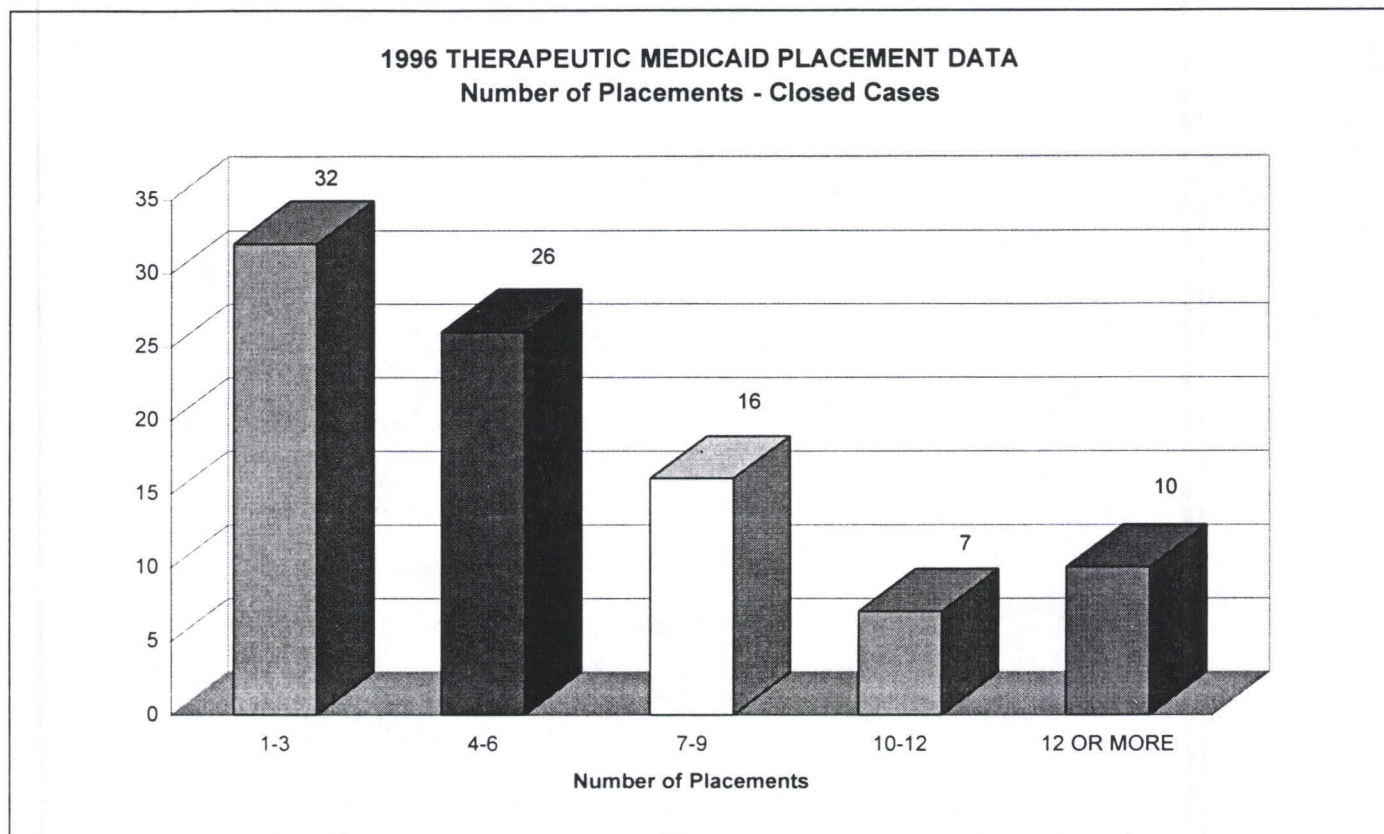


Table T compares the reasons children in therapeutic placements left care during 1996. This data indicates that children returning to parents, and children emancipating out of the system occurred almost equally during the time period. Because case management responsibility changes when a child's plan becomes adoption, the child's Medicaid status is no longer tracked in the Review Board data system. Related Review Board data for 1996 indicates that seventeen (17) of the children who left the general foster care population through adoption had spent time in therapeutic Medicaid placements while in foster care.

TABLE T

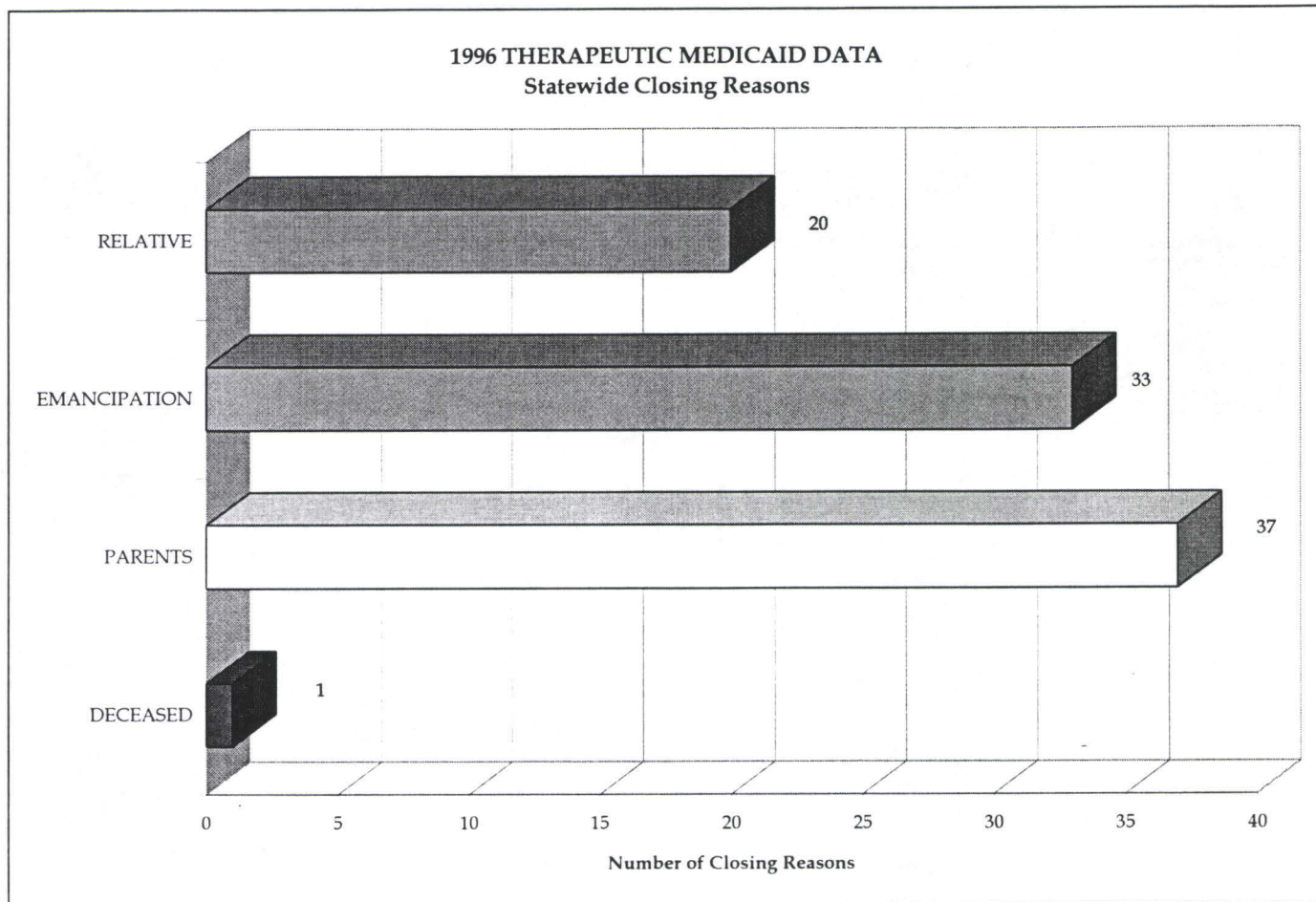


Table U describes the number of therapeutic Medicaid placements in each county and Area Adoption Region. Union County had the highest percentage of children in therapeutic placements during 1996 (100%) and Oconee County had the lowest percentage (4%). Area IV and Area V Adoption Regions showed two percent (2%) of their cases in therapeutic placements while Area III was the highest adoption region with fourteen percent (14%).

TABLE U

THERAPEUTIC PLACEMENT BY COUNTY

January 1, 1996 - December 31, 1996

TOTAL REVIEWS FOR TIME PERIOD: 9,200
TOTAL CHILDREN REVIEWED: 5,258
TOTAL CHILDREN REVIEWED
IN THERAPEUTIC PLACEMENTS: 1,122
PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN REVIEWED
IN THERAPEUTIC PLACEMENTS: 24.2%

COUNTY	#Children %Reviewed in TP	#Children in TP	% in TP	COUNTY	#Children %Reviewed in TP	#Children in TP	% in TP
ABBEVILLE	19	1	5%	GREENWOOD	51	8	16%
AIKEN	215	87	40%	HAMPTON	36	4	11%
ALLENDALE	23	3	13%	HORRY	291	62	21%
ANDERSON	203	57	28%	JASPER	12	-	0%
BAMBERG	34	11	32%	KERSHAW	54	14	26%
BARNWELL	41	10	24%	LANCASTER	80	18	23%
BEAUFORT	92	22	24%	LAURENS	27	8	30%
BERKELEY	186	38	20%	LEE	44	11	25%
CALHOUN	23	7	30%	LEXINGTON	110	38	36%
CHARLESTON	560	78	14%	MARION	64	16	25%
CHEROKEE	54	14	26%	MARLBORO	40	8	20%
CHESTER	43	13	30%	MCCORMICK	10	3	30%
CHESTERFIELD	50	8	16%	NEWBERRY	29	4	14%
CLARENDON	77	14	18%	OCONEE	89	5	6%
COLLETON	65	8	12%	ORANGEBURG	151	32	21%
DARLINGTON	68	13	19%	PICKENS	63	22	35%
DILLON	48	8	17%	RICHLAND	689	137	20%
DORCHESTER	87	15	17%	SALUDA	43	10	23%
EDGEFIELD	37	10	27%	SPARTANBURG	264	77	29%
FAIRFIELD	39	8	21%	SUMTER	160	21	13%
FLORENCE	203	20	10%	UNION	14	10	71%
GEORGETOWN	60	12	20%	WILLIAMSBURG	24	4	17%
GREENVILLE	313	81	26%	YORK	179	49	27%
AREA I	81	6	7%	AREA IV	65	1	2%
AREA II	79	2	3%	AREA V	47	1	2%
AREA III	80	12	15%	AREA VI	27	1	4%

MEDICAID REVIEW SYSTEM

In addition to regular reviews conducted by local boards, children in therapeutic placements funded by Medicaid may receive more attention from the Review Board. Local review boards who have concerns about permanent plans for children in therapeutic placements, the quality of treatment, or the appropriateness of a therapeutic placement may make a referral to the Medicaid Review Specialist. The Medicaid Review Specialist may arrange a separate Medicaid staffing with appropriate parties, or conduct additional inquiries relative to the case. The Division of Foster Care Review operates this quality assurance review system for emotionally disturbed Medicaid eligible children who reside in residential treatment placements through a contract with the Department of Health and Human Services. This program has been operational since 1992.

In addition to referrals for local review boards, the Medicaid Review System is involved with other interagency collaborative efforts on behalf of emotionally disturbed children. The Medicaid Review Specialist is a regular participant in a program assistance effort that offers training and technical assistance to private providers who are providing therapeutic services to children. Routine reviews drawn on a sample population of children in select therapeutic placements also are conducted throughout the year.

During 1996, the Medicaid Quality Assurance System conducted separate reviews on 120 children in Medicaid funded therapeutic placements. Of the children reviewed, ninety-four percent (94%) required residential (therapeutic) treatment services. Sixty-eight percent (68%) were placed at the appropriate level of care and sixty-two percent (62%) were in placements appropriate for their needs.⁷

Another function of the Medicaid Quality Assurance Review System is to track areas of concern identified during Medicaid staffings. These Areas of Concern are cited for the purpose of focusing on problems which may impede and/or adversely effect the treatment of children in Medicaid funded therapeutic placement and/or result in the recoupment of Medicaid funding. Table V identifies the Areas of Concern identified and the associated percentages. The different Areas of Concern tracked by the Medicaid Quality Assurance Review System are as follows:

Communication - A lack of communication or coordination between members of a child's treatment team which may include lead clinical specialist, Department of Social Services caseworker or casemanager, therapist, foster parent, child, physician and Continuum of Care service coordinator.

Delivery of Services - A delay or lack of implementation of therapeutic interventions identified in the child's treatment plan.

Discharge/Transitional Planning - No development and/or implementation of an appropriate plan when preparing to discharge a child from a therapeutic program.

⁷ Percentages are rounded to the nearest tenth of a percent. In some cases, information received was insufficient to make accurate assessments on several children from each category.

Monitoring/Medication - Failure to have a physician routinely and appropriately monitor the administration of medication for a child in a therapeutic setting.

Permanency Planning - No identification of a permanent plan by the treatment team working as the child's casemanagers.

Treatment Plan - No treatment plan developed for the child, or a treatment plan that fails to support the need for the identified level of care or the need for treatment services. The format of the treatment plan may be inappropriate, or the treatment plan is generic and not child-specific.

Visitation - There is insufficient visitation or contacts between the child and family members or significant others where appropriate.

Other - Refers to any problem which may adversely affect treatment services not otherwise identified.

TABLE V

MEDICAID REVIEW AREAS OF CONCERN

Time Period: 1/1/96-12/31/96

AREA OF CONCERN	FREQUENCY	% OF TOTAL CONCERNS
1) PERMANENCY PLANNING	10	8.3
2) TREATMENT PLANNING	38	31.6
3) OTHER	3	2.5
4) DELIVERY OF SERVICES	10	8.3
5) COMMUNICATION	11	17.5
6) VISITATION	2	1.7
7) DISCHARGE/TRANSITION PLAN	1	.8
8) MONITORING MEDICATION	0	-
TOTALS:	75	100%

IN CONCLUSION - A WORD FROM THE CHILDREN

The most important players in the child welfare system are seldom heard. What do the children think? How do the children feel? The Division of Foster Care Review wanted to give the children a chance to be heard. The following articles and artwork are reprinted from South Carolina YOUth Connected, a publication of South Carolina Families for Kids, operating in partnership with the South Carolina Department of Social Services and the United Way of South Carolina. Funding for South Carolina YOUth Connected is provided by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the South Carolina Department of Social Services.

When Will Children Have the Right to Call it Quits?

by Memee, 17 years old

If I could change one thing about the foster care system, it would be that once children are taken away from their biological parents, they would not be able to return. Some children return home only to face these situations a second and a third time.

I know. I have been there. I was hurt most the second time, knowing my mother allowed the neglect to happen again. I have emotional scars that have yet to begin to heal. This is very hard to deal with, being hurt all over again.

Children never know what they will encounter in life. We look up to our parents for positive reinforcement and advice. To me, going home was all I ever wanted. When I got there, things got better, but then I started seeing the repetition of the neglect that got us taken the first time. It was a nightmare.

I thought that her letting us go the first time was a mistake. I'm here to tell you: Mistakes happen, and everyone is entitled to mistakes, but when these mistakes are continually happening, they are no longer mistakes. It's what you are allowing to happen. You learn from your mistakes, you don't repeat them.

It's OK to realize that you have made a mistake or failed at something. It's only human. We are tired of being treated like a part of a "system" or a "program," instead of like human beings.

It's time for these parents to take on responsibilities and be parents. That's their role, as parent figures for the children. Children are a gift. We are supposed to be special. We carry a special bond for parents, yet we are constantly ignored, abused, abandoned, neglected and hurt, emotionally, physically, sexually, mentally and verbally.

When are we as children going to have the right to call it quits? It's not fair for us as children. We get the raw end of the bargain and always end up paying the price for our parents' mistakes.

A Wish

by Sweet Thang



Sometimes I wish I were a bird,
Where I could see all the love
Around the world that's going on
And that I'm missing.



Sometimes I wish I were an airplane,
So when all the hurt comes around
I can just fly away from it
Instead of feeling the pain.

Sweet Thang is 16-year-old who lives in Conway.

Illustration by Sweet Thang

Strangers

by Elmedia

I see people come in every day.
Not knowing who they are coming to see,
Could it be me? No way.
They want a baby.

One day a couple comes in.
I try to get their attention
So they will come to me,
But I am impossible to see.

Another couple comes in
With big smiles on their faces.
It's just another couple.
They won't come to me.

I hear someone calling my name.
I look up, and it's them.
They hold their arms out, and
I go to them.

I found a mom and dad.
Now I don't have to be lonely anymore.

Elmedia is a 15-year-old who lives in Spartanburg.

It's NO
GOOD!

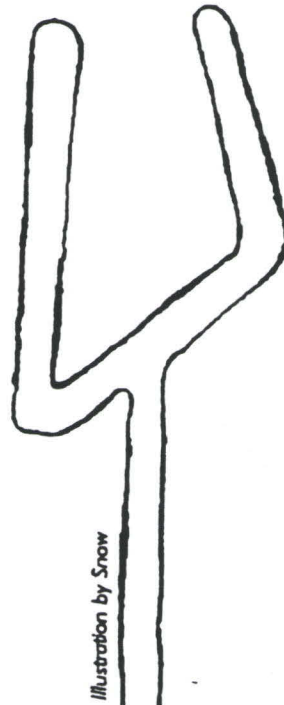


Illustration by Snow

Life

by Snow

Life is like a football.
Always being thrown and
kicked around. From the 30-yard
line to the 50-yard line. From a
50-yard field goal to a 13-yard
touchdown pass.

Life seems like an endless
game of football.
You always are being
used for the gains of
other people.

You never can tell what's
going to happen. From
being thrown incomplete
or an intercepted pass.
Who knows?
Maybe fumbled.

Snow is a 15-year-old who lives at Ashley
Manor in Summerville.

"You must work - we must all work - to make the world worthy of its children." Pablo Casals

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